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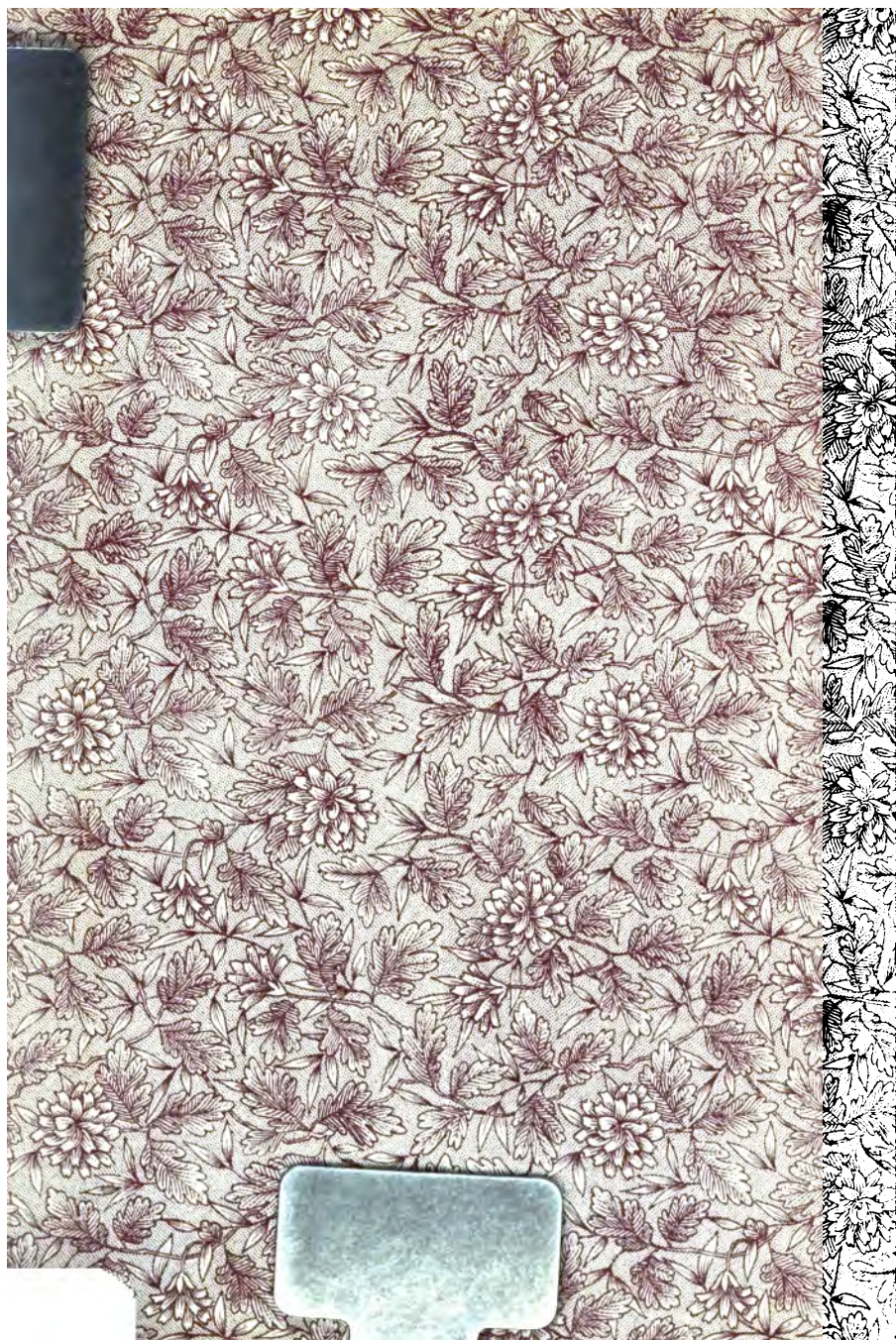
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ST AUBYN'S LADDIE.



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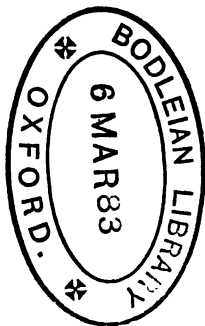
ALAN AND CYRIL.

"Arthur's Tiddie"

'ST. AUBYN'S LADDIE,'
AND
THE LITTLE WOULD-BE SOLDIER.

BY
E. C. PHILLIPS,
AUTHOR OF 'THE ORPHANS,' 'BUNCHY,' 'HILDA AND HER DOLL,'
ETC., ETC.

Illustrated by J. Jellicoe.



GRIFFITH AND FARRAN,
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TO MY NEPHEW
ALICK IRVING JACKSON,
IN FOND MEMORY.



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‘ST. AUBYN’S LADDIE.’

CHAPTER I.

ALAN AND HIS MOTHER.



‘We have had *such* a lovely walk, Mother darling,’ little Alan Godfrey whispered, one day, as he gently pushed open the door of his mother’s bedroom and peeped into it; but then seeing that she was quite awake, he changed his tactics, and running in and kissing her, repeated in a much louder voice:

‘such a splendid walk; and Nell and I have put our money together and bought—oh! but I forgot, Mother,’ he went on, ‘it’s a secret, and I wasn’t to tell you; but you don’t know, do you, because I don’t want you to know?’

‘I know nothing about it, Alan,’ replied

his mother, brushing, as she spoke, some of her boy's thick hair from off his flushed forehead.

'And you don't know who it's for either, Mother, do you? Try and guess.'

'For you?'

'No.'

'For Father?'

'No.'

'For Nell?'

'No; it isn't any of *our* birthdays soon, you know. Try to guess again.'

'For me?'

'Oh, Mother, why did you guess? I wish you hadn't,' then said Alan, in a really disappointed tone of voice; 'but you couldn't guess what it is, could you?'

'That I am sure I could not,' she replied; 'but it is quite certain to be something very pretty and useful, if you and Nell have chosen it together.'

'Yes, we did,' said Alan; 'and you haven't got one, so it will be useful, won't it?'

'I should think very.'

'And Mother,' said the strange little boy, who simply seemed as though he could not keep a secret, however much he might wish to do so, 'the other day you were saying that you would like to have one very much.'

Mrs. Godfrey considered.

'Don't try to remember, Mother; oh, please don't,' Alan began again as he gave his mother another kiss, therewith, as it were, to kiss away her remembrance of what he wished forgotten. 'Is your birthday to-morrow?'

'No; not till to-morrow week.'

‘Oh, what a long time to wait! You know, Mother, I would tell you what the present is if I hadn’t promised Nell that I wouldn’t. Shall we ask her if you might have it a little bit sooner, or don’t you mind waiting?’

‘Not at all, Alan; and I think it will be a very good lesson, for our patience, for me to have to do so for a week; and if you have promised Nell not to tell me, you must try very hard to keep your promise. So now let us talk of something else. Where did you go for a walk to-day?’

‘In the Palmerston Road, of course; and then we went on the pier for a little time.’ So many things were ‘of course’ with Alan. ‘But, Mother,’ he continued, just reminded of something else, ‘people are rude at Southsea, Nell says they are, for they did stare at me so on the pier to-day, and then they said, “What a beautiful boy! What a lovely child!”’

‘That was rude!’ was his mother’s reply; ‘for people ought never to make remarks about others loud enough to be overheard. But perhaps they were speaking of some other little boy, and not about you at all.’

‘No; it was about me, because they looked right at me, and said, “What nice black curls!”’

‘Well, Alan, as Nell said, this was very rude, but it is not worth thinking any more about. Some people like black curls, you know, and some like fair ones, whereas many people think that it is quite ugly for a little boy to have curls at all. Another time, if people make those rude remarks, I think, if I were you, I should just run on and not listen to them.’

‘That’s just what I do mean exactly to do the very next time,’ he answered, looking very indignant as he went out

of the room. But the next moment found him back again to make one more remark, which was this : ' I expect you'd better have your sleep now, if you haven't had it yet ; so I won't come in again till '—

Alan stood peeping in at the door for Mother to name the time.

' After tea,' she said.

' All right, Mother ; but I hope that isn't going to be a very long time.'

Alan was a regular mother's boy, and, could he have had his way, would have spent all day and every day with her ; and more especially had he clung to her during the last month, since his Ayah had returned to India.

' Here's a letter for you, Mother,' he whispered about half an hour later, looking in at the door once more *before* tea-time. ' I thought as there was a letter, and I took it out of the box, I might come just to give it to you before tea ; so may I, please ? But were you asleep, Mother ? '

Alan was very anxious that his mother, who the doctor now said needed an afternoon nap, should have it undisturbed ; yet if he could do so without Miss Jeffreson seeing him, he would be always ' going to listen, and peep,' if she were asleep ; and if she were not, he thought there could be no harm in his going in.

Alan evidently did not at all realize that perpetually disturbing his mother prevented her from falling asleep, and that as a very slight movement would often disturb her, it was no wonder that he found her so constantly awake.

' Come in now with the letter, Alan,' she said ; ' but how is it that you went to the letter-box at all ? You should have been in the schoolroom with Nell ; and when Mother

tells you not to come to her again till after tea, she means you to obey her, does she not?’

‘I looked for the postman out of the window,’ Alan answered; ‘and when he came and rang the bell, I thought it might be the letter you wanted, Mother; and so I wanted to get it for you quickly: is it the right letter?’

How could Mrs. Godfrey scold now? She had been expecting this very letter for two days, and her wild little boy had remembered this, and had watched for the postman so as to bring it quickly to her, and be the one to give his mother pleasure.

‘Isn’t the baby better, Mother?’ he asked, as, having read the contents of the letter, tears came into her eyes.

‘What made you think about the baby, Alan?’

‘Because you and Father said that he was ill; isn’t he better?’ half sobbed the child.

‘Why, Alan, I did not know that you were in the room when your father and I were talking about the baby; what ears my little man has!’ And as Mrs. Godfrey spoke she gently pinched them.

‘Aren’t you glad now that I brought you the letter, Mother? But is baby better? Please tell me soon.’

‘The baby is dead, Alan,’ she answered seriously. ‘God has called your little cousin home.’

The child burst into tears.

‘Oh, Mother!’ he said; ‘and I wanted to see him and to nurse him when you took us to St. Aubyn’s. Poor little baby! It’s like me dying, isn’t it, because he was Alan too?’

‘Like me dying!’—oh! how those three short words

made the mother's heart bleed for that other mother who had lost her little one.

'Not quite like you dying, my precious boy,' Mrs. Godfrey answered; 'for baby is so much younger than you are, and has been with his parents so much shorter a time, that they could hardly miss him as I should you. But they must be very, very sad, although their little darling himself, you know, is far better off now than he was before he went away.'

'I don't like him to die,' said Alan.

What could this little child know of death; and why should he grieve so much for a baby-cousin whom he had never seen, his mother wondered?

'He has gone, dear boy,' she then said to him, 'to such a bright, happy Home—to a far, far better one than the most beautiful home that there could be on earth; and he will live with God and the angels, Alan.'

'Why did God take him?'

'Because He loved him and saw that it was good for him to go.'

'Does God love me as much?'

'Quite as much, I hope.'

'Then why didn't He want to take me too, mother? He would have had two Alans then!'

'Because perhaps God saw fit to spare one Alan to grow up to be a good man and a great comfort to his father and mother. But we never ask, you know, why God does things. We only know that everything He does is right.'

'And a brave man I expect I'm meant to be—a brave soldier, you know. Mother, you forgot that. Mother,' Alan

then exclaimed suddenly, 'I think I've guessed why God made the baby die. I shouldn't wonder if he mightn't have wanted to be a soldier too, and then perhaps he'd have been ill like Cyril is, and couldn't have been one.'

Having come to this conclusion, Alan, for the moment, seemed to be quite satisfied, so far as his baby-namesake was concerned; but he had not yet done with his questions.

'Does the letter say how Cyril is?' he asked.

'No, my darling; it does not.'

'I wonder when he'll be better?' the child went on. But his wondering was soon brought to an end by his father coming into the room, when he knew that he must go.

His mother looked thoughtful as he went out. Her Alan was a very strange little child, so wild and full of spirit, yet at times so very thoughtful and observant beyond his years, for he was really only five years old last birthday.

Mother's birthday present was quite forgotten for this evening, when Alan thought, and spoke, of little else than the little dead Alan St. Aubyn and his other cousins.

'And I meant to save this to take to him,' he said at tea, passing, as he spoke, his very pretty cup and saucer, on which his name was engraved, for Miss Jeffreson and Nell to admire. 'Mother said I might give it to him; but of course I can't now.'

'He doesn't want cups and saucers now,' Nell said.

'When do you think we *shall* go there, Miss Jeffreson?' Alan then asked. 'I haven't seen them once, you know.'

'Yes, you have once,' replied Nell.

'I didn't see them, though, of course, because I was only a baby.'

'I expect you saw them,' said Nell, 'but you can't remember.'

'Can *you* remember anything of them?' Alan asked quickly.

'Yes, of course I can, as it was only four years ago that we went there, just before we went to India, and I was rather a big girl then, as I'm double your age, you know.'

'Are you?' asked Alan seriously. Then he began to say his multiplication table: twice 1 are 2, twice 2 are 4, twice 3 are 6, twice 4 are 8, twice 5 are 10. Oh yes, how funny! Then when I am fifty, you will be a hundred, because Miss Jeffreson told me to-day that twice fifty made a hundred.'

Nell considered: she was not very clever at figures, but still she could soon put Alan right about this. 'No,' she said; 'I shan't always be double your age: it's because I am five years older than you, and twice 5 are ten, that I'm it now.'

Alan could not quite understand; but if Nell said it, it was sure to be right, so he dropped that subject.

'I ought to be more unhappy than you, Nell, you know, about the baby dying; *do* you know that?' Alan soon began again.

'Why, Alan?'

'Because, as he had my name, I must have been his godfather, of course.'

Nell burst out laughing.

'You are a funny boy,' she said.

'Well, I have my name because my godfather, Uncle Alan, had it too.'

The up-stairs bell now rang.

'There, Alan, that's for us to go and say "good night." Come along,' Nell said, and as she spoke the pair trotted down-stairs together to give their father and mother their evening kiss.

'Is the baby's father and mother very unhappy now, do you think?' Alan asked as he sat upon his father's knee.

'You ought to say "are they?"' corrected Nell.

'Are they, Father?'

'Very sad to-night, I am afraid.'

'But Alan likes it himself; and is Cyril, do you think, a bit like me,' the child went on questioning, 'as he's my age? who is quite the oldest?'

'Cyril is five days older than you are.'

'And is he like me at all?' Alan now appealed to his mother.

'From what I hear, I should think very little indeed,' she replied. 'He has short, fair hair, and you have'—

'A long dark mane,' the child answered, looking at his father for approval, for this was a favourite saying of his. 'But manes don't curl, do they, Mother?' he added. 'And what colour eyes has he?'

'Blue; and yours are grey, with much darker eyelashes than Cyril's have.'

'And aren't our——alike?—you know, the colour of our faces?'

'Yes; your complexions are very much the same: they are both fair,' was the answer.

Alan did so long to be like his cousin Cyril in some ways ; but had he been really like him, what sadness must have come to this wild child !

‘I’m glad they are alike, Mother. When do you think we shall go there ; will it be soon now ?’

‘It may be.’

Then came prayers, ‘good night,’ and to bed ; but long into the night Alan dreamt happy dreams of his St. Aubyn cousins, whom he so longed to see.

‘Alan’s quite forgotten to ask you what time you have to be on parade to-morrow, Father,’ Nell whispered as she said her ‘good night.’ ‘I believe it’s almost the first night he’s forgotten to ask you since we came to Portsmouth. He said yesterday that he thought the time for parade in Allahabad much more sensible than the time here. He liked early hours, like 6 or 7 o’clock, not 10, as the hour for parade is so often now.’

‘Alan is a funny little man,’ was the Captain’s reply, ‘but a regular soldier’s boy.’





CHAPTER II.

A FIT OF TEMPER.



‘WHAT
is that
dreadful

noise?’ Mrs. Godfrey asked a week later, opening the schoolroom door as she spoke, and looking into that room to see what the loud crying which she there heard could be all about, although she could very nearly guess; for she recognised Alan’s voice, and Alan had sometimes a very naughty temper.

Miss Jeffreson was now standing by him, and he, white with passion, was screaming and kicking—not kicking his instructress—oh, no, Alan was too much of a little gentleman to do anything as dreadful as that even in a rage, but kicking the harmless, unoffending schoolroom wall

as he stood in a corner of the room, where Miss Jeffreson had placed him.

'What is all this about, Alan?' his mother asked in a very stern voice for her.

The little boy still cried with passion.

'I am sorry to say,' replied Miss Jeffreson, 'that Alan is a very naughty boy this afternoon. He wrote his copy very badly, although he can write it well now, if he choose; and when I told him to write it over again, he cried like this, and said that he would not do it.'

'It's play-time now, Mother,' he sobbed, 'and I've "a something" to settle with Nell. I don't see why I should do lessons in play-time,' and as he spoke Alan cried louder than before.

'Go up-stairs at once to your little bedroom, Alan,' said his mother gently, 'and stay there until you are a good boy again. When you have conquered your naughty temper you can come and tell me that you have done so, but do not leave your room till then.' Mrs. Godfrey knew that it was of no use to argue with her child in his present mood.

Alan obeyed, and going into his little room he walked straight up to the window to look out of it. There he could see Nell in the garden, all by herself, waiting, he knew, for him, for they had made such beautiful plans together for 'in the garden' after lessons to-day. But Alan could not help knowing whose fault it was that only Nell was there to keep their appointment. Again the child sobbed; and as he turned round to walk away from the window, he caught sight of his face in the little looking-glass hanging in his room—of that face which the people

on the pier had rightly called beautiful, which Mother so loved to kiss, which the angels, who watch over little children, knew so well by sight ; but it was anything but beautiful now. Angry, tear-stained, and discontented was now that little face which God had made beautiful, but which Alan's temper had so disfigured.

He walked away from the glass, and, throwing himself upon the ground, leant his head upon the side of his little bed to rest himself, for his passion had made him feel quite tired ; and there he sobbed aloud for half an hour, which seemed a very long half-hour to his dear mother, who was waiting below for her boy to be sorry and grow good again.

Then his tears gradually changed from tears of temper to those of sorrow, and at last Alan was returning to his better self.

After yet a little while he said this prayer out loud : ' Pray God take Alan's naughty temper away, and make me a better boy, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.' And then he cried again very bitterly, for he was very unhappy now. He had grieved God, he knew ; he had grieved the angels, and his mother too, for she had often told him that he grieved her by being such a naughty boy, and this thought made him sad. But presently he grew quite calm, when he jumped up, opened the door, and went down-stairs to the schoolroom, there to find both his mother and Miss Jeffreson still waiting for him. Directly he opened the door they could see that it was a good Alan who was returning to them, not the naughty one who had been sent up-stairs ; and Mrs. Godfrey knew also, when she sent her little boy to his room to conquer

a fit of temper, that he would not come back to her until it was conquered.

'I am very sorry, darling Mother, and Miss Jeffreson dear,' he said, going up to them both with a kiss; 'so may I please do my copy now?' and as the little boy spoke he took his seat in front of the copy which he had before refused to write, and at once began to do it as well and carefully as it was possible for so shaky a little hand to write.

Then Mrs. Godfrey went away, telling Alan to come to her in her bedroom, before her dinner, as she wished to speak to him.

The copy was finished just a quarter of an hour before tea-time, when kind Miss Jeffreson allowed her little pupil still to go out into the garden to Nell for that quarter of an hour.

'I thought you were never coming,' Nell said as he joined her; 'but I've got on as well as I could alone. I've settled on all the flowers that we'll pick, and Miss Jeffreson says we may get up a little earlier to-morrow morning and pick them then, so that they may be quite fresh. There are quite enough too in our own two beds without asking the gardener to give us any of the others.'

Alan skipped round in great glee.

To-morrow was the long-looked-for Mother's birthday, and the flowers were to be gathered for her.

'May I see the present once more, Nell?' he asked when they had washed their hands and were ready for tea.

The careful little girl, who had the charge of the treasure, now brought it out again.

'Won't Mother be glad?' Alan said with pride; 'and I haven't told her what it is, and she didn't guess when I said once it was something she wanted; and of course she couldn't, for she only said one day that she wanted a new thimble, and the present is ever so many things, too, that she did not want.'

'But, Alan, she will want them all.'

'Oh yes, of course; let me count our present: it's a number, isn't it, though it's all in one? Let's see,' and he arranged the things, as he spoke, upon the table, 'a thimble, a pair of scissors, a knife, and what do you call this, Nell?'

'A bodkin.'

'And another knife.'

'Yes, for fruit; and a stiletto.'

'Six whole things; and Mother only expects one, I do believe,' and Alan clapped his hands with delight, until it was time for him to put them together to say his grace before tea.

Directly after tea he went to his mother's room, as she had desired that he should.

He was looking quite happy and bright again, as he flung his arms round her neck, saying as he did so, 'I've come, Mother.'

She took him on her lap. 'What is the use of such a dear pretty face,' she could not help thinking, as she looked at her little son, 'when my boy has so very naughty a temper?'

'Alan,' she then asked, 'how could you behave as you did this afternoon? Do you know, you made poor Mother very unhappy?'

'Miss Jeffreson has forgiven me now, Mother,' he replied.

'As she is so kind and forgives so easily, it is all the worse in you to give her so much trouble, Alan. Oh, my boy, you do not know how you grieve me when you are such a naughty child; and I was almost beginning to hope that the temper was beginning to be conquered.'

'Don't be sorry now, Mother, because it's over now, and I'm good again. Do you want to know how I got good?' he whispered. 'I said the little prayer you taught me, first to myself, and then out loud; and I think I'll often be saying it; so it is over now, isn't it?'

'If you have been really sorry, and mean to try very hard to be better, and ask God, in earnest, to help you to conquer your temper. If not, it may quite conquer you some day, Alan,—be much stronger even than yourself; and then perhaps make you do something for which you would be dreadfully sorry and ashamed. And what was it really all about to-day? Why did you not write your copy directly you were told?'

'Because I wanted to go out sooner into the garden to-day. I wanted to talk to Nell about a secret; it's for you, Mother, and that's why it was so particular that I shouldn't do a copy.'

'And because you wanted to do something for me, you did something else that made me more unhappy than perhaps I could make you understand if I tried to do so for a long time. Is not this a very funny way to do things for me? Oh, my darling boy, if you only knew how unhappy this temper of yours sometimes makes Father and Mother, I am sure you would try hard to be a better

boy. And now, you know, we must find some punishment for your naughtiness to-day, that will help you to remember to try to be good next time.'

'It won't be anything for to-morrow, Mother, will it?'

'No, Alan, it shall be over to-day. You shall go now and wish Father "good night," and then go at once to bed; and when you are in bed I should like you to say over to yourself, till you fall asleep, your hymn, "My Father, hear my prayer," and the verse of the other hymn that I taught you the other day, beginning, "Heavenly Father, put away."'" Alan laid his head down on his mother's shoulder and cried. He did not at all like to go to bed in punishment, but he knew that he must obey, and he knew also that he deserved to be punished; so, giving her another of his affectionate kisses, he went off, saying: 'Aren't you glad that to-morrow's so near, Mother? and may I choose what pudding you shall have?'

'We will see about all that to-morrow. Good night now.'

'Good night, Mother darling; and as I'm so sorry, you won't be sorry about that any more, will you?' he said, looking back.

She smiled.

'Isn't it a pity, Father?' he began as soon as he had sought him out. 'I've come to say "good night," as I've been very naughty, and have to go to bed now. If I hadn't had to go, I might have helped you to polish your sword, mightn't I?'

'You might have helped me to do all sorts of things; but I am very sorry to hear that you have been naughty, Alan,' was the answer.

'And Mother's sorry, and so am I, and I expect Nell

and Miss Jefferson will be sorry too; so everybody's sorry.'

'And that shows,' said Captain Godfrey, 'what a dreadful thing it must be to be naughty, if it can make so many people unhappy.'

And this it really had done; for everybody loved Alan very dearly, and earnestly wished him to become master of these dreadful fits of passion which seemed, at times, completely to overcome him. I think the little boy was really penitent himself to-night, and for ten minutes after he was in bed he might have been heard crying, and saying softly over and over again these verses, which he had been taught out of *The Children's Hymn-Book* :—

'My Father, hear my prayer
Before I go to rest;
It is Thy little child
That cometh to be blest.

'Forgive me all my sin,
And let me sleep this night
In safety and in peace
Until the morning light.

'Lord, help me every day
To love Thee more and more,
And try to do Thy will
Much better than before.

'Now look upon me, Lord,
Ere I lie down to rest;
It is Thy little child
That cometh to be blest. Amen.'

'Heavenly Father, put away
All things wrong I've done to-day;
Make me gentle, true, and good,
Make me love Thee as I should;

Make me feel by day and night
I am ever in Thy sight :
Jesus was a little child :
Make me, like Him, meek and mild.'

"Like Him, meek and mild," Alan repeated very slowly and softly as he dropped off to sleep; and when Father and Mother, later on in the evening, went to kiss their sleeping child, it seemed to them almost impossible, as they gazed at the sweet, calm, smiling little face resting on its soft white pillow, that it really could be the face of the child who was at times so passionate. As soon as Alan had gone to bed, Nell went to stay with her mother until her parents' dinner-hour, when she returned to the schoolroom to make dolls' things until she went to bed.

Sometimes Miss Jeffreson dined late; sometimes she did not.

'You will be quite sure to let me be called early, Miss Jeffreson, won't you?' Nell asked as she said 'good night,'—'long before Susan comes with the hot water, you know, because we want to put the flowers on a table near to Mother before she wakes. I have told Father the secret, and he says he will wake early to say "Come in," and he'll see that there's room on a little table to put the things. I wonder what he's going to give himself! He would not tell us. Do you know, Miss Jeffreson?'

Miss Jeffreson had not an idea.

Nell, too, was very glad that her mother's birthday was so near, but she seemed to go to bed very unconcernedly even on the night before; and this was, perhaps, because,

although she loved and enjoyed fun as much as Alan, she had **none** of his impetuosity, impulsiveness, or excitability of temperament. But she was a very dear, loving, and unselfish child, who gave her mother and Miss Jeffreson, they both said, very little trouble.

I will not, however, further describe Nell's character to you, as you must find out about that for yourselves, by what she says and does, as it is, you know, by what we say and do that people guess what we really are.

Nell took one more look at her mother's present in the little drawer where she had kept it so safely for more than a week, then she tucked up her doll, who always slept in a little cot beside her, and a few minutes later fell asleep herself, making up her mind to try to awaken very early on the following morning, which she did, neither she nor Alan requiring then to be called. The eyes of both were open long before either could be allowed to get up, and they were out in the garden gathering the choicest, indeed most of the, flowers from their own beds some time before seven o'clock.

Their father kept his promise, and in answer to a very gentle tap at the door, bade them, with a very gentle 'Come in,' to enter.

They went on tip-toe, and Alan nearly screamed with joy when he saw that his mother was really still asleep—fortunately only 'nearly' did so, or, of course, he would have spoilt everything.

The lovely bunch of flowers, which Nell had arranged very tastefully, was then put on the little table near the bed; and the ladies' companion, which their own

savings had bought, was laid beside it; and Alan looked upon the whole arrangement with great satisfaction.

‘Do you think we’d better kick against something to make Mother wake now,’ he asked, ‘so that she can see it soon?’

‘I think you had better let her sleep as long as she can, and then be surprised when she wakes up and sees such beautiful presents,’ was the Captain’s answer.

‘Then shall I stand outside and listen?’

‘I think you had better go right away, as poor Mother has had a very bad night, and ought to sleep now as long as she can,’ was the whispered reply; ‘so be off to your breakfast, which I am sure you must both want, as you have been up so early, and I will have you called directly your mother wakes.’

As Alan might not kick against anything, or let anything tumble down, he was very glad to get away, for he was sure that he could not keep quiet much longer.

‘Isn’t it lovely, Nell?’ he said on their way to the schoolroom. ‘And I believe I am to choose the pudding; so we’ll think at breakfast what it had better be, shall we?’

‘Yes; but it must be Mother’s favourite.’

Alan considered. ‘I expect that would be about the same as my favourite,’ he said; ‘don’t you? And Nell,’ he went on, ‘Mother is coming to have tea with us, and we are to go down to a long dessert after dinner; and shall we ask for you to pour out tea?’

‘Mother ought to, as it’s her birthday.’

‘But then as she does so often, she might let you.’

‘I should like to very much,’ said Nell; ‘and they will be the large tea-things too!’

On Nell and Alan's birthdays, Nell always poured out tea and used her own tea-set.

'Then we'll ask,' said Alan, quite pleased to have planned so great a treat for his elder sister, who also seemed to be very grateful to him.

The children had barely finished their breakfast when they were summoned to their mother's room; and as Miss Jeffreson gave them permission to go at once, we can imagine how quickly they were down-stairs. Their mother was admiring her flowers as they went in.

'Thank you so much, my darling children, for your beautiful presents,' she said. 'It was very good of you to think of giving me such pleasure.'

'And isn't our present a number of things?' Alan asked, once more making the most of the ladies' companion, by displaying its contents all over one side of the table; 'and you didn't guess, did you, Mother, and I never told you?'

'I could never have guessed all those things. You have chosen a most useful present.'

'And we were such a time in the shop, Mother,' Alan said, 'before we fixed.'

Mrs. Godfrey could well believe this.

'And I wanted so much to tell you what it was; didn't I, Nell?'

'I should rather think he did. I had to ask him about every other minute not to say anything about it, so as to keep him quiet. I'm very glad your birthday has come at last, Mother, for I must tell you, I've been very frightened for Alan.'

The little boy drew a sigh of relief. I think he had been a little frightened for himself too.

‘And are these lovely flowers all from your own beds?’ their mother then asked.

‘Every one,’ they both answered together.

‘I am afraid you must have stripped them quite bare,’

‘Not quite,’ said Nell; ‘and if we had, we should not have minded a bit. We should like you to have every one of our flowers even if it weren’t your birthday.’

‘And I’ve chosen the pudding for you, Mother,’ said Alan; ‘roly-poly strawberry jam with a whole pot in it. Shall I choose the pudding for your dinner too?’

‘I think I had better choose that for myself,’ she said, ‘as it must be one that Father likes, you know,’ Mrs. Godfrey said, smiling; ‘but you and Nell are to come down to dessert very early this evening, and to sit up till half-past nine; and I understand you have invited me to take tea with you this afternoon.’

Nell looked at Alan. She was a strangely timid child even in asking a favour of her mother.

‘May Nell pour out tea for a treat?’ he asked at once.

‘Of course she ought to do so, as she and you have invited me to tea; but what time am I to come?’

‘Suppose we say three,’ said Alan quickly, ‘and then we will — you till tea is ready.’

He looked at Nell to supply the word.

‘Amuse?’ she suggested.

‘No.’

‘Entertain?’ said Mrs. Godfrey.

‘Yes; entertain you till tea is ready.’

‘I am afraid I cannot come quite so early; but I hope to be with you by four o’clock,’ said their mother. ‘And you may have’ —

'Oh, please don't say, Mother,' Nell exclaimed, 'as we want to surprise you.'

'Very well, I will leave it all for you and Miss Jeffreson to arrange between you; but now I think you had better go to your lessons. Miss Jeffreson has kindly given you a half-holiday, Nell, but she wishes you both to do lessons till twelve o'clock.'

They went off quite delighted and did their best, although not very much was expected from Alan when he was as excited as he was to-day. He had a half-holiday on most days, as the morning was considered long enough, at present, for his lessons; but he was making good progress, and could already read very well for his age.

The children were very busy in the afternoon preparing for their little tea-party, and helping to arrange the tea-table themselves, which they laid out very tastefully with small vases of flowers and pretty little paper-mats, which Nell had learnt to cut out herself.

Of course Miss Jeffreson dined with Father and Mother this evening, and the children thoroughly enjoyed the longer evening with their parents afterwards. They hoped, they said, when they went to bed, that their mother had been as happy on her birthday as they had been.

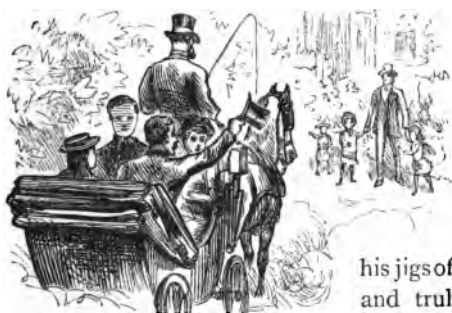
Who knows? Perhaps she had. Good, loving little children can do so very much to make their parents happy not only on their birthdays, but every day.

And when Nell and Alan went to bed, they were very glad to think that they had spent nearly all their savings on their mother's present, who, they knew, young children though they were, was, every hour of their little lives, doing and sacrificing something or other for their good and pleasure.



CHAPTER III.

ST. AUBYN'S.



‘WE’RE going,
we’re going,
—oh, isn’t it
beautifully
jolly?’ shouted
Alan one day
as he per-
formed one of

his jigs of delight. ‘Really
and truly, Nell. When

will next Monday be, should you think? We are going
to St. Aubyn’s,’ he continued, his little cheeks crimson
with excitement; ‘and I shall see Cyril and play
with’—

He stopped short.

‘Cyril can’t play much, you know,’ said Nell. ‘He has
to lie down all day.’

Alan was grave in a moment. He could not under-
stand how a little boy, his size, could lie down and keep
quiet all day. It seemed too strange to be true; but perhaps,

he thought, when he saw Cyril he would be able to teach him to run about and play.

Alan had heard a good deal of his little cousin Cyril, just five days older than himself, and it had been the great wish of his little life, even when he was in India, to go and see him at his home, St. Aubyn's. But as Alan's father's regiment had only returned from India two months ago, they could not go before; and now an invitation had just come, the Captain's three months' leave of absence had been granted, the invitation accepted, and the day was fixed for them all to leave Portsmouth on a visit to St. Aubyn's.

Poor Miss Jeffreson quite despaired of doing anything with Alan after 'the happiness was fixed upon,' as he called it, for from then till 'the travel-day' came, he either never knew a lesson or could not stand still long enough to say it properly. Little boys and girls, who have looked forward to some great treat for as long as they can possibly remember, which at last has come to them, will perhaps understand what Alan's great joy was when he really found himself seated in the train on his way to St. Aubyn's.

Nell, too, was very happy indeed, as her smiling little face showed to everybody who looked at it.

The railway journey was over, and a very lovely country drive had begun. Alan was awed as he passed along,—exhausted, his father said,—and no doubt he was very tired; but I do not think, somehow, that that was altogether the cause of his silence now. In the railway carriage he had made remarks, and had asked questions by the dozen; but now his exclamations were very few and far between.

'How lovely! how beautiful!' he gasped from time to time as he looked out upon wild heather, bracken, tall

and little fir trees, lake scenery in the distance, hills on either side, with a deep valley between them, then farms, little homesteads, fields, and village shops.

‘Oh, I do like here, Mother! What beautiful corn-fields! What do you call the name of that flower? Is that a river, Father? Why does your regiment not get sent to a place like this?’

All these questions Alan asked every now and then out of the midst of his silence, but not at all quickly and all in a string, as so many of the excitable child's questions were put so often; and when they drove through the gate which shut in the St. Aubyn's estate's-house and park, and Alan heard that the house with turrets, which he could see on a hill, half-buried in trees, was St. Aubyn's, and quite near now, he looked as though he really felt that he had come to spend his holidays in Paradise. The vegetation was new to him and different from what he had ever seen before. And when Alan also heard that everything here belonged to his uncle, he could not help exclaiming: ‘Oh, why aren't you rich too, Father, and have all these trees “and things”?’

As they drove farther on, many sheep, lambs, goats, cows, calves, horses, ponies, and dogs were all in turn moving here and there in different directions. Alan was so lost in admiration at the sight of the trees and flowers and animals at St. Aubyn's, where he was to spend a month, that he had begun to forget to wonder what his uncle, aunt, and cousins were like, when all of a sudden he espied a gentleman and three little children coming down the pathway to meet them, and the next moment the castle house, as Alan had named it, came also in close view.

The three children were two little girls, exactly the same height, who were twins of three years and a half old, and a little boy not quite two, whom they were leading between them, the nursemaid following close behind, for Donald walked very little out of doors as yet.

Nell and Alan both looked shy as the carriage stopped and their uncle bade them 'Welcome to St. Aubyn's.'

'Shall we get out here?' asked Captain Godfrey. 'You and the boy can, if you like,' said his brother-in-law, 'but Nell and her mother may as well drive up to the door.'

Alan now clung to his mother. He was not wont to be a shy boy, but somehow or other he felt timid now; so he remained in the carriage, and it was not until they alighted at the entrance to the house, where Mrs. St. Aubyn herself stood ready to receive and welcome them, that Alan would let his mother go, and begin to make friends with his little twin cousins, who had now resigned the charge of Donald, and had run across the grass so as to arrive at home *with* the carriage.

Nell seemed to have kissed everybody before Alan had begun to say his 'How-do-you-do's' at all.

'Hulloa, old man!' exclaimed his uncle, 'what's the meaning of this? A soldier's son afraid of his own relations! But I expect you are tired, after your long journey, and want your tea; so let us all go in quickly to make ready for it. And after tea, Margery,' he continued, speaking to one of his little twin girls, 'I should not wonder if he makes friends with us all, and talks more than any of us.'

'Mother,' Alan whispered as he went up-stairs, 'I haven't seen Cyril yet. I don't believe I shall be a

bit shy when I see him ; and isn't it a pity about the baby ?'

It was now three months since Baby St. Aubyn had died, but Alan, strange little boy that he was, had not at all forgotten this baby namesake.

'You must not talk of the baby now, Alan,' his mother answered, 'as it may make your aunt sad if you do.'

Everything seemed so very new to Alan in the 'castle house,' as he passed through the passages, that he still kept tight hold of his mother's hand until he found himself in one of the prettiest of prettily furnished little rooms overhung with pictures. Everything that love and forethought could suggest to add to the comfort of a little invalid son was collected in this little room ; and there lay the child himself in front of a bow window, which overlooked a large expanse of the garden, fastened to a couch. His head was a little raised, and so were his feet, and hanging over the foot of the couch was a heavy weight, which was attached to one of Cyril's legs to prevent it from shrinking. The two children, the one so strong, the other so weakly, stared at one another.

'There's Alan, you see,' said Mrs. St. Aubyn as she led him up to his cousin's couch, 'come at last to see you, Cyril ; are you not very glad ?'

'And come to stay too, Mother,' he replied quickly. Alan leant over and kissed his cousin, but did not yet speak to him.

He had said that he would not be shy when he saw Cyril, and still he was. It seemed so strange to this wild, strong child of five to see another little boy, exactly his own age, lying down so quietly and not able to get up to

play, that for the moment he could not say anything to him, for there seemed to be nothing in common between them to say.

'I am very glad you've come up to see me,' Cyril said at last; 'I thought you never would come, for I saw you first when you came to there,' and Cyril pointed a very long way off.

Alan moved nearer to the window to see. 'Oh, look, Mother!' he said, 'where Cyril saw us from.'

'This is Cyril's own room,' then said Mrs. St. Aubyn, 'and everything in it belongs to him; and you must try to be good friends, and spend as much time, Alan, as you can spare from running about, up here with Cyril, won't you? and he will show you his treasures. He can't run about, you know; so he is very glad to have a little friend to come and amuse him sometimes.'

Mrs. St. Aubyn and her sister then moved into Cyril's little bedroom to look at and admire that, and left the little boys together.

'Is this little room all your very own?' Alan then asked. 'What a lovely room!'

'Yes; and that big box is full of my toys, and I'll show them all to you. Would you like to see them now?'

Alan would have liked to do so, but tea was quite ready; so he had at once to go down to it, promising, however, to be very quick and come back to see the toys directly afterwards.

'Isn't it a good thing Alan has come to amuse me?' Cyril asked his nurse as soon as they were alone again; then he added, 'Do you think I shall be able to walk soon now?'

Nurse could not say that she did.

For a year little Cyril had already been upon his back. For a year before that he had complained first of pains in his knees, then pains in his side ; but at first no one had suspected what was the matter with him. One day, when his father and mother had been away from home for a few hours, the child, who was playing with a nursemaid in the garden, the nurse being indoors with the baby twins, had a very severe fall. He cried a good deal, but she had soon succeeded in diverting his attention and quieting him ; and when she took him in to the head-nurse, there was hardly any bruise to be seen ; and as she had not even heard the child cry, she thought very little of the bruise, and made very few inquiries respecting it. Cyril, who was then three years old, had walked for nearly two years ; but after this he constantly seemed to wish to be taken up, and became restless and fretful.

The family medical man ordered change of air, change of diet, and said the little fellow was never to be allowed to grow tired. Many remedies were tried, but Cyril became no better ; and then one little leg began to shrink and become shorter than the other, from which time the child was ordered to lie continually upon his little back.

It was clear now that he was suffering from a form of hip-disease ; but there was great hope that, with care, he might recover, be on his feet again and strong in a few years' time.

But now at the end of a whole year Cyril was no better, and if anything sometimes rather weaker in himself.

There had been a consultation of medical men only a week ago, and although they bade the parents hope, they

could promise nothing but that very careful nursing *might* effect a cure, and said they hoped to see a marked improvement within the next year.

And Cyril's watchful, careful, anxious nurse believed in her heart, though she told her fears to no one, that, at the end of that year, no improvement would have come. Her opinion was even less favourable than that of the doctors.

'Do you, Nurse?' the little boy repeated.

The good woman could not tell a falsehood.

"We must wait longer to see," the doctors say,' she replied; 'but it *is* a good thing that Master Alan has come to play with you. He will amuse you nicely; and you have beautiful things, Master Cyril, to help to make up for not being able to get about. It isn't every boy who can't play about, or every little young gentleman either, that has such toys to play with to make him forget.'

'I hope their tea won't take very long,' Cyril said as his own came up. 'Perhaps Alan might have his with me to-morrow; Mother said he might if he liked.'

Directly after tea Margery and Kathleen wanted Alan to go into the garden and poultry-yard with them. They were very fond of the fowls, and wanted to show them to Nell and Alan at once; and, if he liked, they said, he could see where the strawberries grew that he had eaten at tea.

Impulsive little Alan was all eagerness to go, but Nell looked very gravely at him. He had told her when he came down to tea, in a very excited manner, about the promise he had made to Cyril to return to him directly after tea, and now the more thoughtful sister wanted him to remember and keep that promise.

'And shall we see Cyril at the window?' Alan asked, perhaps beginning to remember.

The nursemaid stepped out to look.

'No,' she said; 'Master Cyril is not there now.'

Margery and Kathleen were having their sun-hats tied on. Nell was quite ready to go out into the garden with them for a short time, when Alan turned round to her and asked:

'Shall I go, do you think, Nell?' He must quite have remembered now.

'Poor Cyril!' she said in her gentle way; 'I expect, you know, he keeps on expecting you.'

Alan's mind was then made up. Nell had a good deal of influence over her little brother, though she never disagreeably interfered with him.

'May I go to Cyril now?' Alan then asked, turning to his aunt, who was only too glad to take him back to her little boy, although she had not liked to say anything to prevent her little visitor from going out into the garden first if he wished to do so.

Alan looked out of a passage window as he walked through the house (there seemed to be windows everywhere), and when he caught sight of Nell and the little cousins, he did so long to be with them that he even sighed over the sacrifice he was making; but as soon as he opened Cyril's door, he was sorry no longer to have given up a pleasure to please him.

That dear boy had been wheeled opposite to his toy-box,—that was why he was not visible at the window,—out of which he was having all the toys taken that he thought Alan would like best to see first. How dis-

appointed; Alan was old enough to think, poor Cyril would have been if everybody had gone out into the garden, and none of them had come to play with him!

'Look!' he said as Alan went in; 'I thought you'd like me to have these ready to show you,' and displayed before him were a box of bricks, a toy theatre, a puzzle, a camp of soldiers, several cannons, and a ball.

How very glad Alan now was again that he had not gone out. Cyril *would* have been disappointed to have got them out for nothing.

'What lovely toys!' Alan exclaimed. 'Oh, I should like to have toys like that!'

Cyril was glad that he was pleased.

'Which do you like best of all?' he asked.

Alan did not hesitate a moment.

'This, of course,' he said, pointing to the soldiers; 'because my father is a soldier, and I'm going to be one too. I couldn't help liking these best, could I, because I do love soldiers? Shall we have a sham fight now?'

Cyril agreed to do so, and Alan arranged the tin soldiers on a little table that fitted across the couch; and for a time the sick boy enjoyed the game, but he soon grew too tired to do anything further than look on, while Alan was both sides, and after a very little while longer he was ready for the game to be put up.

'As you like the camp best of my toys, that's for you,' Cyril said, 'for you to have to keep.'

Alan stared.

'Really and truly?' he asked; 'to keep always and take home with me?'



A SHAM FIGHT.

'Yes,' said Cyril; 'but you won't go away for a long time yet, will you?'

'I like here better than anywhere there is in the world,' Alan answered. 'And I'm glad too that I came up here instead of in the garden, aren't you?' and as the child spoke he kissed first Cyril and then his camp.

'Are the others in the garden now?' asked Cyril. 'Please, Nurse, wheel me to see.' The window was lower than Cyril's couch, so that he could see into the garden easily. The two children looked out of the window together.

Alan had once asked if they were alike.

They were perhaps the most striking contrast, these two little cousins of the same age, that you could well imagine, as the mother of the invalid boy sadly thought when, from the garden, she watched the two dear little faces.

Alan had rosy, fat cheeks, whilst Cyril's were very delicately pale; then again he was tall and very broad for his age, but poor little Cyril was thin and slender; and whilst Alan's hair hung in long black curls over his shoulders, Cyril's, which was fair, was kept quite short.

Both children were remarkably pretty; but the beauty of the little fair face did not seem somehow quite all for here, for this world. And the mother who three months since had lost her little baby boy, began to ask herself in real, doubtful earnest, as she watched her firstborn beside his little hale companion, would he, who could now neither walk nor play like other children, ever grow tall or old or strong?

But how she loved this little son of hers only she could

tell—ay, fonder, dearer, better if possible than had he been strong and rosy-cheeked like Alan !

The window was open to admit the evening summer sunshine.

‘Does Alan want to come into the garden?’ Mrs. St. Aubyn questioned ; ‘because if so, do not keep him on his first evening, Cyril darling.’

‘Do you, Alan?’ asked the little boy, as he spoke turning round a little face that seemed to long to hear ‘No.’

‘Which shall I say?’ asked Alan.

‘Don’t you think it will be nice to look at them from here?’

The poor little questioner often had to persuade himself that this was very nice.

Alan wanted to go into the garden, but he liked to stay with Cyril too ; and somehow or other, though the little fellow did not quite know what he felt, he had already a great deal of love and sympathy for his little cousin who had to lie down all day ; and as Alan looked at the beautiful camp which he still held in his hand, that Cyril had been so kind as to give him, he called out of the window that he would ‘stay up here, thank you.’

‘It must be beautiful to have a room like this for one’s own, and such a lot of toys,’ said Alan ; ‘aren’t you glad you’ve got them?’

‘Yes ; but I should like to be able to go out into the garden like Kathleen and Margery do, and play ball like they’re playing it—but shall I show you how I can play with my ball now?’ Alan said he would like to see very much, and handed it to Cyril, who, lying upon his back, then threw it up into the air higher and higher, catching it

with his hands, his arms being free from the shoulders, quite cleverly every time.

'I wonder if I could do that,' said Alan, throwing himself upon the ground as he spoke, and from thence tossing up the ball; but he did not succeed at all, and had each time to get up to fetch it. Cyril then tried to teach him how to catch as he did, and thus the two children amused themselves for several minutes; but Cyril soon grew tired again, and had to give up that game.

Presently the nurse, who had been busy in the next room, went down-stairs for a little time, saying that she would soon be back to put Master Cyril to bed.

The two little boys were quite quiet now, when Alan suddenly looked up and asked:

'Would you be unhappy, do you think, if I said it, Cyril?'

'What?—if you said what?'

'Well, you know, I'm not to talk about it, because it makes people unhappy; do you think it would make you?'

'What?' the other repeated.

'About baby; would you cry if you told me about him?'

'No,' was the quick reply; 'I'd like to tell you, as you never saw him. He was quite little, and we hadn't had him long, and he'd only been a few times in the garden, and once in the carriage to church to be christened; and a few times Mother had brought him up here, when she came to sit with me; but then he went right away from us.'

'Poor baby! I wish he hadn't gone.'

'But he likes it,' replied Cyril. 'Father and Mother say he likes it a good deal better than here.'

'Would you like it better, do you think, Cyril?'

The little boy smiled. 'I'm very happy here, you know; but still, if I could run about there, I think I should, though I don't want to go away from Father and Mother and you, now you have come. I wish you'd always live here with me.'

'Baby had a nice name too, hadn't he?' asked Alan.

'It was the same as yours.'

'Yes; was he like me, do you think?'

'He was too small,' laughed Cyril; 'he wasn't like anybody.'

'Do you do any lessons?' then asked Alan. 'I do, at home with Miss Jeffreson.'

'Yes; I do lessons with Mother. Will you do mine with me?'

'I thought it was my holidays now, and I shouldn't wonder if you have them too, as I've come to see you.'

'P'raps I shall,' said Cyril. The lessons that he did were to him more a pleasure than a task, and he liked them very much.

'I've got to quite long stories in my reading-book; have you too?' and Cyril showed Alan where he was now reading.

'I don't think I'm as far as you, Cyril,' Alan answered. 'You are far.'

The little invalid was very quick indeed at learning to read.

This comforted Cyril very much, who had been afraid, as often he was not well enough to do his lessons, that Alan would be able to read much better than he could.

Cyril would be too tired now if he talked any more; and

as Alan must also go to bed early this evening, and just run for a few minutes into the garden first, the mothers of the two boys now came in to separate the little newly-made friends.

They looked very happy. Cyril told his mother, as she saw him laid on to his night couch, on which he had to be so very carefully moved and strapped, and which was much the same to look at as his day couch, that she could not tell how glad he was to have Alan come to see him ; and that other little boy's dream was not only fully realized, but the real being with Cyril at his home was better even than had been the dream about it !





CHAPTER IV.

IN CYRIL'S POSITION.



THE next morning after breakfast Alan was sitting quite quietly in the dining-room with his father and uncle, turning over the leaves of an *Army List*, to which his father had been referring before placing it upon the table.

‘What are you looking for, Alan?’ asked Mr. St. Aubyn.

‘For a fellow,’ the child replied carelessly, still turning over the leaves of the book.

‘What fellow?’

‘A friend of mine.’

‘But you haven’t any friends there, have you?’

‘Yes; I have one in the 57th, of course.’

‘What is his name?’

'Manse,' said the child with decision—'Manse of the 57th.' The name was a pure invention of his, as was also the number of the regiment, for no one else had ever heard of this young officer, or had mentioned the regiment to him; but from henceforth Manse became one of Alan's dearest friends (in imagination), and never a day passed without Alan's naming this imaginary friend in his prayers, and few days passed without his pretending to consult the *Army List* with reference to his promotion when he had the chance to do so.

Cyril also had to listen when Alan talked of Manse, but he was more practical, and wanted to see him. This he, of course, could not do; but then there were ready excuses at hand. The 57th was perhaps ordered a long way off. Anyhow, Alan fully believed himself in the existence of this friend.

Sometimes he would pretend to scribble letters to him, and if he could manage to do so, he would even post them. But it happened one day that one of these letters had been enclosed in an old envelope directed to Mr. St. Aubyn, for which Alan had asked, instead of in one on which the direction consisted only of a scrawl of Alan's; and the letter was therefore re-delivered to that gentleman, and double postage charged upon it.

Alan's letter-writing was thus found out, and a stop was put to all posting of his letters; but the child's only grievance even now seemed to be that the letter had not reached its destination, and he no longer really cared to post letters, because he had lost faith in the postman.

Nell was very happy at St. Aubyn's although she had, amongst her cousins, no companions of her own age; but

then, as one of her greatest pleasures consisted in having little children to look after, she felt herself of great importance when she played with Kathleen, Margery and Donald, healed their little differences, and, as she thought; kept them in order. Nell was perhaps growing just a little old-fashioned ; but then this cannot be wondered at, for although she had had several little friends of her own age living close to her in the barracks in Allahabad, she had more often been either with grown-up people or with her little brother, who was so much younger than herself.

Nell now constantly found herself looking at her little twin cousins and thinking and wondering about them. They were so exactly alike in height, but not at all alike in face or in anything else. Nell liked Kathleen the best, though so many people seemed to like Margery most, and to pet and spoil her. When the little sisters quarrelled, it generally seemed to be Margery's fault somehow ; and if both wanted the same thing, it was almost always Kathleen who gave in, and Margery who had her way. Nell always tried to prevent their quarrelling ; but little though Margery was, she could not help thinking sometimes that she was rather a disagreeable little thing.

It was Margery who had the prettiest face by far ; it was Margery who was thought clever and bright ; and yet Nell, so soon as she had seen at all much of her little cousins, told her mother that she was sure she loved Kathleen a good deal the best.

Alan had now heard all that he wanted to know about the baby. Cyril had told his mother that Alan wanted to know about him ; and when he was assured that it did not make her sad to talk about the little one, but that it

gave her pleasure to do so to his cousin-namesake, the child was delighted to ask his numerous questions, and the little fellow's pretty sympathy for the loss of the baby went far to comfort the sorrowing mother.

Mrs. St. Aubyn was growing as fond of Alan as were most people—ay, more fond ; for the little man's presence had brought such comfort to her poor boy that she dreaded to think of the time when they should be parted again, and nothing gave her so much pleasure as seeing Cyril pleased. But as we are not near the parting yet, indeed, as we have still to spend part of the first day after Alan's arrival at St. Aubyn's there with him, we must not begin to talk or think of such sad things.

After the child had paid Cyril a long morning visit, and had been out into the garden, he said he wanted to walk round and round and round the house so as to learn it, and certainly the ins and outs of St. Aubyn's Hall were not to be learnt in one round. As the house was very large, and yet only consisted of three stories, it was very wide. On the ground floor were the dining-room, drawing-room, large play-room, library or master's study, his office, and two other reception-rooms entirely set apart for his use. Then to the back were the servants' offices.

On the first floor were the schoolroom, day nursery, Mrs. St. Aubyn's boudoir and conservatory, four best bedrooms, three dressing-rooms, and the beautifully situated little room set apart for Cyril's use, and called by his parents the 'Snuggery,' with another yet smaller one leading out of it for his bedroom, which opened, by folding doors, into a large room occupied by his own nurse Jocelyn, for Cyril had a nurse entirely to himself. Three stair-

cases led from this floor down-stairs—one a very wide one, that had been built to carry Cyril's couch down very easily, whenever he might be taken into the garden, which, however, was not very often the case.

On the floor above were the large night nursery, several other rooms and servants' apartments. Large passages, hung with pretty pictures, wound and twisted in and out, and round and round the house, and from every window was a lovely view. Most of the down-stair windows were what are called 'French,' for they opened into the garden.

Cyril's windows were bow. At the top of the house was a turret which gave it the castle-like look that Alan had admired so much, and a central window here commanded a very far and wide view of the surrounding country.

Alan was most eager to go up here, as soon as he might, to look out of the window; but he was so sorry when there that nobody could be spared to walk 'as far as he could see to see if he could see them.'

'Of course that's where we came,' he said, 'and that was where the third horse was put in to bring us up the hill. It is rather a steep one, but not nearly as steep as some of those other ones, is it?'

It was a servant Alan addressed who had been sent up to the turret with him.

St. Aubyn's Hall itself stood in a beautiful park, a very pretty garden and terrace immediately surrounding the house. A large orchard and kitchen garden lay to the back, and out of the latter Alan was to gather strawberries for his tea with Cyril this evening.

And this was only a 'tiny' portion of the St. Aubyn property, to which Cyril was heir—Cyril, whom some folks,

but not many, called the 'cripple boy,' for they did not like that name—Cyril, who might neither stand, sit up, nor walk, and who but very seldom was even carried downstairs at all.

Was it any wonder that his poor mother should sometimes look very sad when her eldest-born was such an invalid and helpless boy?

But the loving God knew best, and she and the father tried very hard and earnestly to realize this and bow to His Almighty will.

A little later on in the day, James, the head gardener, was allowed to take Alan for a long walk through the park and gardens, where the little boy was also very anxious to go at once; and this ramble he most thoroughly enjoyed, for James was a very good-natured man, and tried to satisfy his many inquiries.

'What are they doing there?' Alan asked.

'Cutting down trees, sir.'

'What for?'

'For timber.'

'What's timber?'

'Wood for building.'

'What are they going to build?'

'You're of a very inquiring turn of mind, young mister, aren't you?' poor James said at last.

'James,' Alan began again presently, 'do you think I'm big enough to climb a high tree yet? I've been wanting to for such a long time, and Mother says I shall when I'm bigger. Don't you think I might do it now, if you helped me?'

'I could help you well to do that, Master Alan. When I

was little bigger than your size, I used to be first-rate at climbing trees. Ah !' James then sighed, 'our young gentleman would have just such spirits as you, if he'd only got the health ! Poor "Master Laddie," there's his pony he's never rode, his part of the garden he's never put a seed into himself. Ah, Master Alan, good health, says I, that's *the* thing to be thankful for ; and it just brings it home to one when one sees a young gentleman like that born to everything he might have, and could have, and can't even sit upright on his bed to enjoy anything. Don't it bring it home, Master Alan ?' James asked very seriously. Alan looked serious too. Somehow or other, people talked to this wild little chap as though he were a good deal older than he really was ; and James, during this first ramble with him, began to hope that he might have the honour, before the young gentleman went away, of taking him many more rambles, and also have the pleasure of teaching him to climb the highest tree in the park, so long as Master Cyril did not see him do it or know anything about it.

The earnest eyes of the child were suddenly fixed intently on James, while they filled with tears ; and standing still, he exclaimed, 'Poor Cyril ! Oh yes, James ; I am glad that I can run about and play, and come and see all this with you. I did think Cyril must be so happy to have all those toys ; and I wanted some too, and meant to ask my father if he couldn't try to be rich and give me some (for he isn't rich, you know, James) ; but I shouldn't like it at all if I couldn't go out and learn to climb trees.'

'No, Master Alan ; health's the best thing of all—health, says I, before riches ; let me keep that, and I'll never

grumble. Thank God for good health and strength, Master Alan, and may you never want them.'

'Yes I will, James. When do you think I'd better say it? And wouldn't you like me to thank God that you can climb trees too?'

'Yes, Master Alan; and say the thanks night and morning—they're well worth saying—and ask for our poor little "Master Laddie," up there, to get better soon.'

'Why did you call Cyril by that name twice, James?' the child then asked, putting on as he spoke a sober mood, that he wore a very long time for him, really, until a group of ponies running by attracted all his attention for the moment.

'There's a many calls our young master by that name,' said James; 'and it's the most favourite name among us too for our dear little young master. Ah, Master Alan, there's a very many at St. Aubyn's who loves "Master Laddie," I can tell you, and most of all by that name somehow.'

This was no explanation for the reason of the name, but Alan seemed satisfied, and went on: 'And you call my uncle "Mr. Cyril" sometimes?'

'Yes; it comes familiar. I remember him when he didn't stand no higher than you, Master Alan. I've worked at St. Aubyn's many a year under him, and his father before him. He couldn't have been no older than you are, Master Alan, when I first came to dig in and work in this garden.'

'How funny, James; but you don't look to be a very old man, are you?'

'I reckon I'm not an old man at all. I came here, you

must know, quite a lad myself, and my master was then our "Master Laddie's" grandfather. Beg pardon for the name, Master Alan, if you don't like it, but they've all been Master Cyrils—the grandfather, the great-grandfather, all the heirs to the place for a long way back; but they've been hale and strong, and I never thought to live to see one of them a little invalid like that; and when I say "Master Laddie" in place of "Master Cyril," it doesn't somehow seem quite so dreadful,' James added, looking very sadly towards the 'Snuggery' window as he spoke.

'But I should think, James, you must be rather old,' Alan said, 'if you know all that.'

'I'm twelve years older than that tree, Master Alan,' James said, pointing to a yew-tree: 'that was planted the day I came here, thirty-three years ago; and that's just quite a baby tree now, I reckon, and I count myself as quite young still too. I can remember seeing that tree planted as well as I can remember anything,' he went on, 'and I've watched its growth with interest, I can tell you, Master Alan; and I hope we've both plenty of work before us before we're done with.'

'How wonderful!' Alan said, but he did not say what it was that he thought so wonderful. 'It must seem like your tree, James,' he went on.

'More like my child,' he answered, 'as do most of the trees and flowers in this here dear place.'

'And I should think you must love it very much.'

'Ay, Master Alan, that I do, and every other tree on the property. I may well be proud to be a workman here. It's a fine place, little master, and kept up first-

rate. You wouldn't understand about it, I expect, if I tried to tell you, but it is just a finely-managed property ; and every month, ay, every day, seems to bring about some improvement.'

'That is a good thing,' said Alan seriously.

'Ay, Master Alan, that it is. There's order and method here. A time for everything, a place for everything, a workman for everything, work for everybody, and a rule for everything and everybody. And we're all fond of our own work, and the master sets us the example how to do it well and happily, and how to help one another on.'

'Can you remember if my uncle was at all like Cyril when he was "Master Cyril"?' Alan then asked.

'He was a deal darker. Master Cyril more favours his mother in the face : he's not like a St. Aubyn somehow, except in goodness,' James replied. 'I never heard of a sickly St. Aubyn before in the direct line, but please God he'll be better soon.'

'I wish he could be,' Alan sighed. 'Wouldn't it be nice? We'd all climb trees together then, wouldn't we, James? But what splendid ponies!' the child went on to exclaim, for it was now that they ran past. 'What a number ! What are their names? How old should you think they are? Hadn't you better open their mouths and see, if you don't know?'

'They're different ages, Master Alan. You are fond of ponies, I reckon, to ask so many questions about them.'

'Of course I am ; and do you know, James,' he whispered, 'that if I'm rich when I get big, I mean to be long to a cavalry regiment?'

'That will be fine,' said the man, and thus he and the child talked on together, until it was high time for a dish to be fetched, and for the strawberries for Cyril's tea to be gathered in good earnest. A visit to the fowls and rabbits had to be postponed until later on in the day.

Alan was a very sympathetic little fellow, and the thought of Cyril not being able to share in these outdoor joys weighed very much upon his little mind whenever anything especially attractive engaged his attention.

Very early on that first afternoon he appeared in Cyril's little room to have tea with him; and the latter was so glad to have his cousin with him that the nurse said she had never seen 'her boy' enjoy his tea so much before.

Mrs. St. Aubyn took tea very constantly with Cyril, and he looked forward eagerly to these and her many other visits, which he dearly loved; but still it *was* a beautiful change, Cyril said, to have Alan, a boy, to come to spend the whole afternoon with him.

And during this happy visit of Alan's to St. Aubyn's, he spent a great many long hours and days in that 'dear little room,' as he called 'the Snuggery,' and sometimes he did such funny things there that Cyril had to laugh at them for a long time afterwards.

One day he appeared carrying a little kid, which was so heavy that he could hardly carry it; but he said that he thought Cyril would like to see it near, as it was so pretty, so he had brought it. On another occasion he brought in a baby pig that he thought Cyril would like to stroke before he found its mother, for he believed it had got lost.

Had Alan been allowed to do so, I fancy he would have liked to convert Cyril's room, every now and then, into a sort of sty or stable.

Cyril patted both the kid and the little pig, said they were dear little things, and asked for some sugar to give the kid to eat ; but he said he thought he liked to see those animals best from the window, and just have only Joey, his own dog, in his room with him.

Before Alan went to tea with Cyril, Mrs. Godfrey would sometimes tell her son to be very careful what he said to him, and to try to say nothing that would make him unhappy, also not to talk to him when he saw he was tired. 'Do not talk much, for instance,' she once said, 'about climbing trees, as that might make Cyril wish, poor little boy, that he could climb them too. Put yourself in his position, darling, and think how you would feel if'—

'What's position, Mother?' Alan here broke in.

'Put yourself, as it were, in his state ; think what you would feel, and what you would like, and what would make you unhappy, if you had always to lie down and could not run and play like you can now, or ever go out or feel quite well. Try to think what would make you happy or unhappy if you were Cyril, and then do to him that which would make you happy if you were in his position. If Cyril wants you to be with him, and you want to go out, stay with him instead of going out, and see how well you can comfort and amuse him.'

'How long shall I put myself in Cyril's ——?' Alan asked, jumping off his chair. 'Oh, I've forgotten again,' he then added ; 'what is it, please, Mother?'

'Position?'

'Yes; how long shall I go in Cyril's position?'

'About five minutes would be a very good time, if you could manage to think on one subject for so long.'

'Oh yes, I could do that easily,' the odd child said, finding, as he spoke, a low cushion to put upon the ground, and then throwing himself down and resting his head upon it. 'Please, Mother, look at your watch to know when the five minutes are done. You won't forget to tell me, will you? Oh, but I haven't anything for a weight; what could I get?' he added, and sat up to look about him.

'You must imagine that,' she answered, and promised to notice the time.

Then moving about a little until, as near as possible, he had at all events put himself into poor little Cyril's bodily position, and stretching out the leg that should have had a weight attached to it as far as he could, he shut his eyes and began to think.

What his thoughts were he did not reveal even to his mother, but before the five minutes were passed he was wiping his eyes with his little pocket handkerchief; and when his mother told him that the time was up, he said with a deep sigh of relief, 'Oh, I am glad that I haven't always to be in Cyril's—oh, what a bother it is, though, that I *can't* remember that word!'

'Position,' his mother repeated again.

'Thank you, Mother; it's a very difficult word for me, you know. Don't you think it is? P'raps I'd better not tell Cyril that James is going to teach me to climb a high tree alone. I did think he might like to see me do it, but p'raps somehow he mightn't.'

I believe Alan really did try, during those five minutes, to put himself into 'that long word.' If only we did this too, sometimes—not perhaps in quite such a funny way as did Alan, but by considering what the grievances, sorrows, and temptations of little fellow-children may be, and the greater trials and troubles of grown-up people; and by then setting ourselves to think how we can help them in their trouble, how we can give them pleasure and take away from their pain—we should find that much oftener even than we could have thought possible, the great privilege of really helping somebody or other will be granted even to us.

When Alan appeared in Cyril's room, some time before tea, he carried in his hands as long a wooden flower-pot as he could possibly hold, and some seeds wrapped up in paper.

'What is that for?' asked Cyril in surprise; 'a flower-pot without any flower!'

'You've got to make something come there,' said Alan. 'This is mustard and cress seed, and James gave it me. If you plant it in there, mustard and cress will grow very quickly; and you'll see it grow, and can even dig it up if you like,' he added, 'to see how it's getting on.'

Alan had learnt from the gardener how the sowing was to take place; so the seeds were put in before tea by Alan, who first scooped out a very little of the mould in two straight lines, then laid the seeds in these lines and covered them over with the mould.

'Isn't it easy?' he asked. 'And the best of it all is, that the mustard and cress gets there so soon,—in about ten

days, James says,—and we can put the pot just outside the window and see it come.'

Cyril was very glad indeed to have the mustard and cress growing so near to him, where he could watch it 'come,' so Alan had really thought of something to give him pleasure; and the boys settled to have some of it for tea together, if they might, as soon as it had come there for Cyril, and to send a nice plateful up-stairs to the nursery, and one down-stairs to the dining-room also.

Nell had tea with the twins in the nursery, which she liked very much indeed, for she was allowed to pour out tea; and she told Alan afterwards that she felt just like being a little mother to Margery and Kathleen, and as it was her favourite game to play at being a little mother to real children, it was no wonder that she enjoyed herself very much.

After tea the children were all to go for a drive with the nurses, in the large 'family carriage,' as Mr. St. Aubyn called the largest carriage that he had—all but Cyril, that is to say, for of course he could not go, but his mother would stay at home to amuse him.

Cyril had not heard about this proposed drive. The out-door treats for the children were generally kept a secret from him until just before they came to pass.

This evening, when Mrs. St. Aubyn came into the room, she said: 'You know, Cyril darling, Alan is our little visitor; so we want to make him very happy while he is with us, and give him all the pleasure that we can; and therefore we are going to send him and Nell for a pretty drive to-day with your sisters and little brother,

while I stay at home and read to you. You would like him to have this pretty drive, would you not?’

Alan jumped up quickly.

‘You *would* like me to go, Cyril, wouldn’t you? and see it all, and tell you what it’s like when I come back, wouldn’t you?’ he repeated,—‘like I told you about India, and our quarters there, and the native regiments, and the ship we came home in?’

Poor little Cyril looked wofully disappointed.

‘No; I want you to stay with me,’ he answered.

‘But everybody wants Alan to go for a drive,’ said Mrs. St. Aubyn. ‘My little man must not be selfish; and I have brought him such a pretty picture-book to-day. Go and get ready at once, Alan,’ his aunt continued, turning towards her little nephew as she spoke.

‘And what’s Mother going to do?’ he asked.

‘She is going to call on Mr. and Mrs. Maurice, at the Rectory, with your father and uncle, in the pony carriage.’

‘Oh, all right,’ said the child as he ran out of the room.

But he soon came back, saying to his aunt as he opened the door, ‘I’m not going, thank you, as I’ve been putting myself into that again. But I’m going to stay with Cyril; so you can go for a drive if you like, as he won’t want to hear the story if he’s got me, will you, Cyril?’

Mrs. St. Aubyn was growing accustomed to Alan’s off-hand, independent way of talking, but she did not quite understand what the little boy meant now.

‘Putting yourself into what, dear?’ she asked.

‘Cyril’s position; and so I am going to stay with him.’

‘But he wants you to go for your drive very much now. We have been talking all about it, and he is very anxious

for you to see some of the farms, and tell him all about them when you come home; and now he's seen the pictures that I have shown him, he also wants to hear the story about them.'

Alan looked delighted. He wanted to go out very much, but he did not want Cyril to be unhappy.

'You can go now,' Cyril said; 'and Mother and I don't mind being left a bit; so I'm glad you're going.'

Alan started off once more, quite happily this time.

'Perhaps he's been putting himself in my position too,' the little boy murmured to himself whilst he was being dressed to go out, and this to a certain extent Cyril had done; but what could he know of the joy of a long drive, of sitting on the box beside the coachman, and then jumping off from time to time to run up the hills, 'to rest the horses'?

Poor little Cyril could not understand much about this, yet it had seemed selfish in him to wish to keep Alan at home when his mother talked to him about it, and now he was really very glad for him to go; besides which, when he thought, he *did love* Mother to read a pretty story to him, and to show him the pictures, almost better than anything else.

The coachman had received orders to take the children and nurses one of the prettiest drives that he knew. He certainly seemed to do so; and it was such fun for Alan to think that for ever so far they were going just where he had seen from the turret window!

After a time the carriage stopped for Nell and Alan to look back at St. Aubyn's Hall. There it stood on its little hill, looking so very like a castle buried in trees;

and there was the park, and to the back the thick forest of pine, and close by them now was some water in which a few of the village boys were swimming toy boats. On all sides hills seemed to appear, covered with grass and grown over by trees of all shades and colours, and houses dotted here and there, half hidden in pine wood. They were now between the hills in a very narrow valley. The scenery was wild and rugged, and therefore so very beautiful; but in a few minutes they would come to cultivated land, to little farms, to homesteads whose inhabitants were tenants of the master of St. Aubyn, and also lived on the beautiful property to which James was so proud to belong.

The carriage moved on again till it at length drew up at a farmhouse, where the children were all taken out to have a refreshing drink of new milk from Farmer Brand's cows. Here very pretty flowers grew, but especially large sunflowers, in rich abundance, which Nell said she was sure were much larger than any sunflowers that she had ever seen.

'“Master Lad's” flower,’ the farmer's wife said.

‘Who is Master Lad?’ asked Nell.

‘That's the sick young gentleman. Haven't you heard him called by that name yet?’

‘No,’ Nell said; ‘and I think it's a very funny one too.’

The head nurse explained to Nell that the master used to say so often, ‘How is the lad to-day?’ and the doctor used to ask the same question, ‘Well, how is my little lad to-day?’ till Master Cyril was very often called at his own home ‘the lad;’ which name had been caught up in the village, where one person after another learnt to call the

child 'Master Lad,' or more generally still, 'Master Laddie.'

It had seemed strange at first ; but as the people seemed to love the dear boy by this name, his parents had learnt to love it too.

'I think Cyril is a prettier name,' Nell said ; 'but why is it his flower?'

'I like the name "Laddie,"' Alan put in, 'because James likes it.'

Alan and James were great friends now.

'Because it's always looking straight up at the sun,' was Mrs. Brand's answer to Nell's question.

'And look how many hours poor "Master Laddie" lies and does the same thing, gazing out of his window up at the bright sky above ; and he seems a deal brighter and more happy like when the sun's there to look back at him than when the day is gloomy.'

'Is that why this flower is called a *sunflower*? ' asked Nell.

'Yes, little Missy ; because it looks up at the sun. When that doesn't shine, it droops and can't look up any more ; and it has rays, too, like the sun,' and as the good woman spoke she pointed the rays out to the children.

Brand, the kind farmer, gladly spared them all one of his sunflowers, and told them, as he cut them for the children, that he was right glad to give them, and right proud that they were allowed to come to see him.

Alan's sunflower was not quite as good a one as those of the other children.

He looked at it for some time, and then asked if he might have a better one.

Nell reproved him for being greedy, but he said quickly, 'It isn't for myself; I wasn't going to keep it. I was going to take it home to Cyril, of course; and as it is his flower, I wanted to take the best there was.'

Mrs. Brand had already cut two beauties for Cyril, which she handed to Alan to carry to him from her; and then noticing that Alan's was really not a fine one, she gave him another also.

'Thank you,' he said; 'I'm very glad I've got this nice one, because, as I don't want it for Cyril now, it will be for my mother. But you don't know her, do you? She's gone out now to the Rectory with my father and uncle. Shall I ask her to come one day and have some milk here too? I will if you like.'

Alan had, as a rule, a good deal to say for himself. That fit of shyness with which he had been seized when arriving at St. Aubyn's, was a very uncommon fit for him to have.

The man and his wife both told the child that they would be only too proud to welcome the kind lady to their poor home, if she would honour it by a visit. And then it was time for all to jump into the carriage again and be driven back.

Margery was sitting by Alan, Kathleen by Nell, while Donald was on one of the nurse's laps. They had not gone far when Margery was discontented with her place, and wanted to change with Kathleen. Kathleen did not care to change, as she liked very much to sit by Nell, but it was not long before she gave up to her sister.

After a little while, however, Margery wanted to change back; but now Kathleen had made herself very comfort-

able in her present seat, and resented being turned out of it again. However, Margery worried her little twin sister until she gave in to her. As soon as Margery had her own way, she was a dear little girl once more, or rather seemed to be; but what were the smiles worth that made her face look so pretty when they only came there so soon as she had everything her own way, and when she was so selfish towards kind little Kathleen?

I have told you already that Margery had a much prettier face really than Kathleen, but I wonder if you had been in the carriage with them with Nell, whether, like her, you would not have said to yourself that you liked that little Kathleen's face, which her nurses called plain, really the better of the two, and whether, with her, you would not have wondered why some people made more of Margery than they did of her sister. I cannot tell you their reason, I can only be sorry for the spoilt little girl that so it was. Margery was pretty, and Margery was clever, while Kathleen was obedient and kind. Margery said clever, sharp things, while dear little Kathleen was doing kind ones.

Nell took her little cousin's hand in hers when again she sat beside her, and I think Kathleen liked that very much. The twins were both forward children for their age, and found a good deal to talk about as they drove home.

Cyril had gone to bed, so Alan did not see him again that evening to give him the flowers; but they were put in water for him, and the next day the little cousins had much to say to one another—Cyril to tell Alan about the story he had heard read, and Alan to talk to Cyril about the

drive, the beautiful fir-trees, the hay-ricks, the cornfields, the visit to the farmer, and 'Master Laddie's' flower.

Cyril knew that he was called 'the lad,' and 'Master Laddie,' and did not mind it at all, he said, and liked about the flower and the sun very much.

Indeed, he liked most things that Alan told him. The little boys were sworn, stanch friends already, and dearly enjoyed one another's society. The month that Alan spent at St. Aubyn's proved to be the happiest month that Cyril had spent since he had been taken ill, and it was full of happiness for Nell and Alan.

They did not go out visiting much, and few children visitors were invited to the Hall, because Baby had died so short a time before; but there was so much that was new and beautiful for them to see at their uncle's home, both within and out of doors, and such pleasure to be found in their uncle, aunt, and cousins' midst, that they could have wished for nothing that they did not have.

Cyril had given Alan many more toys, which he had made him accept, but the camp was still the favourite toy of all; and as Alan had not one outburst of temper all the time that he was at St. Aubyn's, his parents must have enjoyed themselves there very much too.





CHAPTER V.

THE SWEEP.



‘BUT you know, Alan, the best of it all is that I shall be able to tell Margery all about it,’ Cyril said to his cousin one morning about a week later, ‘and she needn’t be frightened any more, because it isn’t a bit dreadful ; oh, I wish you’d seen it too. Have you ever been frightened at them, do you think ?’

Alan, brave boy though he was, was obliged to own that he thought he had

been a little bit, but not lately, of course.

‘I did like it so much,’ Cyril went on ; ‘and it wasn’t anything like I thought it was. I’ll tell you all about it ;’ and all the while that Cyril then talked, which was as long as his strength permitted, Alan listened, with great interest, to what he had to say. As poor little Cyril could

not run about, or play, or go out into the garden, or have any games like other children, his parents tried to think of, and give him, all the home pleasures that they could ; but this one, this very funny one that he had had this morning, he had chosen himself, and I believe nobody would guess what it was.

Cyril's bedroom chimney required to be swept, and as he had asked permission to see it done, he had been allowed to remain in the room, watch the sweep at his work, and even talk to him afterwards.

Margery was terribly afraid of sweeps. She never saw one, even in the distance, without running to her nurse and catching hold of her dress for protection ; and to be able to tell Margery that one had been in his room, and had talked to him, would raise her invalid brother more than anything else could in her estimation.

'The best of it all,' Cyril said as he continued to describe the sweep's visit to Alan, 'is that I shall quite cure Margery, I expect ; and that will be such a good thing.'

Alan could not make out whether Cyril had or had not been just a little bit afraid himself at first this morning, for he had a wonderful way, little delicate boy though he was, of keeping his fears to himself ; but Alan thought he must have been a little afraid just before 'the dirty man,' as Margery called every sweep, appeared with his brooms. He carried, slung across his shoulders, a bundle of black sticks, which he told Cyril afterwards were canes, also a large circular or round broom, made of whalebone, and two other brooms.

Then he had a large sack with him. To what purpose this would be put, Cyril could not guess ; but he could not

help remembering, as he looked at it, a story which he had one day heard a nursemaid tell Margery, about sweeps carrying naughty children away in sacks, and putting them into black holes till they turned into black little sweeps themselves.

Was it perhaps this untrue story that had caused even the name of sweep to inspire little Margery with terror? Very likely it was.

A number of newspapers had been laid on the floor in front of the fireplace. The sweep knelt down upon these and undid his bundles. From out of the sack he took a large piece of cloth, in the middle of which was a small hole, and then he fastened the cloth in front of the fireplace. Cyril could not think what this hole could be for, and began to remember another story he had heard (unfortunately a true one), of little boys being sent up chimneys, as they used to be some years ago, to sweep them; but then no boy could go through that tiny space. The windmill-looking broom was then put on the other side of the hole, its short end coming through it into the room, when the sweep fixed into its handle one of the canes, and then into the end of the cane another cane, and so on until ever so many were fastened together, and the round broom was pushed up the chimney higher and higher, sweeping it as it went.

The soot was dropping into the fireplace, and the cloth was to prevent it from finding its way into the room. Then the canes were drawn down once more, taken off, one by one, and laid in order, presently to be fastened together again, and last of all, the round broom reappeared also. Then the cloth was taken down, and the soot was

put into the sack ; so this was the sack's use. And the dirty soot was of great use also, for the sweep told Cyril that he would sell it for manure.

Only very little soot had got about the room, and Cyril began to think that all his ornaments need not have been taken away as they were, nor his bed even so very carefully covered up.

'The sweep seemed a very tidy sweep,' Cyril told Alan, 'for he swept up all the soot he could find, and then dusted the mantelpiece with a little broom ; but I don't see how he gets his face quite so black, unless he rubs the soot on,' the child wound up by saying, 'for I didn't see it get black.'

'P'r'aps he rubs his hands on it,' Alan said. 'Oh, I wish he'd lend me his brooms and see if I could sweep a chimney. It seems rather easy ; don't you think it must be ?'

'I don't know,' answered Cyril. 'Fancy, if you broke a stick, and then the broom stopped up there. I don't think you'd better try till you're bigger, at all events.'

'No, I won't ; but it was a nice treat for you, wasn't it ?'

Cyril had certainly thought so, and as he was tired after describing it all to Alan, that little boy was sent to have a game with his other cousins in the play-room, whilst the sick child rested. Nell was with her mother.

But as time passed so happily and quickly, Mrs. St. Aubyn began to dread the day that was to separate the two little boys. Cyril had seemed so bright and happy since Alan had come to St. Aubyn's, and so loved to have his cousin with him, that she feared he would miss him dreadfully when he went away. And even she did not know quite what good

friends they were, and how dearly the two children had learnt to love one another.

'I'll always love you,' Alan had said one day, 'even if I'm ever so far away with the regiment; and some day I'll come back and stay a longer time.'

'Why must the regiment always be a long way off?'

'I don't know; but it gets ordered there, you see. I expect it's one of their faults, the Colonel's p'raps. I wish he'd want to come near here; p'raps he might order us near here then. But we're not going to India again now.'

'It would be nice if you'd come near here,' Cyril said, 'but when do you think you'll come back?'

'I don't know. How many months, or is it years, should you think?'

Alan had no idea of time. 'But p'raps when I do come back,' he added, 'you'll be well; and then we can have jolly games, can't we? Do you think you'll be well when I come back?'

Cyril did not know.

'How do you feel when you are well?' he asked. 'Is it ever very tired?'

'Oh yes,' said Alan, 'when I go to bed.'

'But not when you go to bed,—when you want to play and not feel tired?'

'I don't think so,' Alan replied.

'I'll try and be well when you come back; but if I can't be, come back sooner and play with me. I don't mind never getting up so much when you're here,' Cyril said sadly, 'but I do when you're not.'

Alan looked as though he were going to cry.

‘It’s not yet, though, is it?’ he asked sadly.

‘No, not yet,’ said Cyril; ‘isn’t that a good thing?’ and then the children changed the conversation and talked about their playthings.

Well might the mothers of these two boys think what a contrast they were to one another! The one impulsive, quick-tempered, strong, and very forward, in every respect, for his age; the other so mild, weak, and gentle. And yet they were not so unlike in character after all, for both were brave, generous, truthful, unselfish, loving little boys.





CHAPTER VI.

THE LITTLE WOULD-BE SOLDIER.



‘OH. dear! oh dear! oh dear!’ These pitiful words reached Mrs. Godfrey’s ears as one evening, two years later, she opened the door of a room in which she found Alan muttering them, lying, as he did so, stretched full-length across the table.

‘What is the matter, Alan? Are you sorry to come back to us?’ she

asked quickly, for the child had but that day returned from St. Aubyn’s, loaded with presents, where he had been all alone, as no one else could

then go with him, on a second visit to Cyril, who had longed to have his cousin with him again. ‘Did you not



" OH DEAR ! OH DEAR ! "



want to come home, Alan darling?' the fond mother went on, when her boy gave her no answer.

'Oh yes, Mother darling, I'm very glad to come home; but Cyril will be so dull without me: we do love each other so. But it's not that that I'm crying for; and oh dear! oh dear! oh dear!' he repeated.

'What is it then, darling?' his mother asked anxiously, for he seemed to be dreadfully unhappy about something or other.

'It's something I've promised Cyril, but I'm glad I have. Oh, Mother, isn't it awful for him to be no better; and do you know, I believe he's worse! And he did cry so when I came away again. He was so sorry he was ill when I told him I was going to school, because he wanted to come to school too; but he doesn't often cry because he's ill. I couldn't help telling him I was going to school, could I?'

'No, Alan; you were quite right to tell him that. Is this your trouble?'

'No, Mother; it's something most dreadfully dreadful.'

'Does Cyril know it too?'

'Yes, it's between us; but it's not dreadful for him, only for me. I told him that other bad thing,' he then said, brightening up as his thoughts changed, 'about the camp, you know; and he said he was very glad that it was not all burnt, but if it had been he would have asked Uncle to give me another. Isn't Cyril kind, Mother? And he's given me some new tents. I forgot to tell you before, and you haven't unpacked my new toys yet, have you?'

'No; because my little man seemed to be so tired, and

ran away from me. And you haven't told me either one word about your new little cousin Hyacinth; you know I have never seen her. And won't she soon be a year old?'

'Yes, Mother,' he answered; 'but I couldn't tell you, because I wanted to cry about *that* all alone. But isn't it a good thing that Cyril knows about the camp now?'

Just before Alan went back to St. Aubyn's he had had another of his very naughty fits of temper. I do not know how this was; perhaps he had forgotten to go on praying earnestly against it, but it was a very bad fit indeed that day; and when he went to his room 'to grow good' again, and he went of his own accord too, he saw his dear camp, that Cyril had given him, lying on the ground.

Many a game had he had with this camp, many a pitched battle had the soldiers fought, Nell and he, and boy-friends, helping them to do so; but that day, when he was so naughty, he thought all of a sudden that he would burn his camp, not because he disliked it, but, strange to say, because it was the favourite of all his toys.

I cannot explain these reasons: I doubt if he could have explained them himself; but he thought he would revenge himself by burning the much-treasured toy. Revenge himself on whom? Ah! that was the strange part of it. But do not children in a temper generally revenge themselves on themselves?

A box of matches was in his room, but Alan had been forbidden ever to play with, or touch matches; and as he was a child of his word, and accustomed to obey, they were not hidden away from him.

He opened a large cupboard, into which he carried the camp; then, closing the door behind him, he took the lid off the box which he had treasured and of which he had taken care for so long, struck a match, and set fire to the ravellings which protected the soldiers. He watched them burning for a few moments; but when the cupboard began to fill with smoke, he was afraid, and ran to call some one.

Fortunately the housemaid had smelt the smoke, and was then coming to see what it meant, or Alan might have called her too late. He drew her to the cupboard, where she saw not only his pretty toy on fire, but a new suit which had been hanging up and that he had knocked down.

In a moment she fetched and threw water over the flames, which, not having gained much ground, were soon put out. But the suit was quite spoilt, and, although not very many of the soldiers were damaged, the tents were burnt, the box was all scorched, and some of the soldiers were melting. But the consequences of this great naughtiness were fortunately not nearly so dreadful as they might have been, and not in any way to be compared with the naughtiness itself. Captain Godfrey was really angry with Alan that day, so was his mother; and both parents had punished him severely, one of his punishments having been to wear his old suit, instead of the new one, which was not replaced for some time.

‘Oh, Alan!’ his mother had said, ‘what could make you do such a naughty thing? Yes, a very wicked thing it was; for, to begin with, it was most ungrateful to dear Cyril to vent your rage upon the innocent present which he had so generously given you; then it was an act

of disobedience, as you have been told never to strike a match or play with fire in any way: it made you tell an untruth, because you broke your promise not to do so. And what very shocking, ungoverned temper it was,' she continued, 'to which a little Christian boy should give way, wantonly to set fire to his favourite toy!'

'Oh, Alan! you do not know what the consequences of this very naughty act might have been. The whole house might have been burnt down, with Father, Mother, you, everybody in it; the fire might even have extended to some of the other officers' quarters, and then it would have been Alan who had burnt us all, because his temper had got the better of him.'

The child looked awed. He had no idea, when he set fire to his ravellings, what harm he might really do, or probably, even in a rage, he would not have done it; but because he did not know these things for himself, his parents had told him never to strike a match, to touch gas, or in any way to play with fire, and it was not only his part and duty to obey, but obedience was for Alan, and is for every other little child, the only safe course to pursue.

Alan, after that, grieved desperately for the dear injured camp. His naughtiness brought its own punishment, and he had resolved to try hard to be a better boy, and fight harder against the strong foe within him, which his mother had once told him, with truth, would some day completely conquer him unless he learnt to conquer it.

But all this had been forgiven before Alan went to St. Aubyn's; and when Cyril heard of it, he had also readily

forgiven this seeming ingratitude towards himself, therefore Alan's grief this morning had nothing to do with the camp.

'Oh dear! oh dear! oh dear!' he repeated a third time.

'What is the matter, Alan?' his mother then also asked a third time. 'Come, my little man, and tell me.'

'Well, Mother,' he said as he uncovered his face and looked up from his strange position on the table, 'I'm not now any longer what I thought I was. I can't be it now, and oh, I did so want to be! I didn't mind so much when I was there, but now I've come home it seems so dreadful. And I feel to want "to be going" to be it again so much.'

'To be what, darling?'

'A soldier, Mother. Don't you know I've always been going to be a soldier when I was a man, and now I've promised Cyril that I won't?'

'Why did you make this promise, my darling, if you want to be a soldier so much? But you know,' she said, smiling, for Alan's gravity at seven and a half years old on the subject of the choice of his future profession could not but amuse her, 'that I have always told you there is plenty of time for you to settle what you will be when you are a man. Why, your school days, my pet, have not fairly begun yet. You may change your mind a dozen times before you quite decide.'

'I shouldn't have, Mother,' Alan said, jumping off the table as he spoke, and shaking his head solemnly whilst he stood beside his mother; 'and now I *couldn't* change again, as I've promised Cyril. I went in his "position" before

I promised, and that made me do it, and I can't ever be a soldier now.'

The expression of the child's face, uplifted to his mother's, was one almost of despair. Alan seemed heart-broken. To him it was evidently a most real decision to which, for Cyril's sake, he had come.

Mrs. Godfrey soon saw that to be of any real comfort to her child in his trouble, she must look at matters in the serious light in which he viewed them. 'Tell Mother, Alan darling,' she then said, 'what you have promised, why you have promised it, and all about it, that she may understand better.'

'Well, you see, Mother,' he answered, 'I've often told Cyril that I meant to be a soldier like Father; but this time it made him cry, because he says, he knows my regiment will always be ordered to some place like India, where he can never see me; and then he says I might be sent to battle and be shot, and then he wouldn't have a great real friend left. What he wants me to be is something to write his letters for him, because when he's a man he's sure to have letters to write, and he might get tired if he wrote them himself; and he thinks I should do them well. And he's going to pay me a lot of money for doing them, you know, Mother,' he went on, brightening up at this thought, 'ever so much money; so I shall be able to give you beautiful presents, as Cyril's going to make me quite a rich man.'

'Then you see there is a bright side to the question, Alan,' his mother said.

'Oh, yes! and Cyril is so happy now. He seemed always to be rather unhappy because I was going to be a

soldier ; but isn't it dreadful, Mother, not to be going to be it ?' he asked again.

'You should never make promises, dear boy, without first thinking, for a long time, whether you will be able to keep them ; but now that you have made the promise, you must not be unhappy about it any more. Try to get on very well at school, so as to learn to write Cyril's letters very nicely for him ; and try also to be a good, gentle boy, so as to be a better comfort and companion to him, and then wait for the rest. Perhaps Cyril might, some day, change his mind and release you from your promise, and even wish you to be a soldier.'

'Well, there's just that chance,' Alan said ; 'because he might get well, and not want me to write his letters for him, or not mind my regiment being ordered far away ; but I don't fancy somehow he'll ever change,' and Alan's voice was very tremulous once more, for he was thinking that now he would never have a regiment of his own : it would never be 'my regiment' for him, and he had meant to be such a 'lucky fellow' in the service, to have 'such quick promotion,' to get one step after another, and to be a Major-General even in no time. He had pictured such a grand, brave future for himself in the army, and now all his manly baby hopes were extinguished, as it were put out by himself.

'But you know, Mother, I did think,' he soon began again ; 'for, don't you remember, I said I put myself in Cyril's position ?'

'Yes, I do remember now ; and therefore, my darling, having done so, you must hope and believe that you have said what is right ; and if you ever want to be so unhappy

about it again, remember how very happy you have made Cyril, which is, after all, far, far better than being happy yourself, is it not ?'

Alan put on his 'considering cap,' as his father would have called it—his 'seriousness,' as he would have himself termed his present mood; and then, after thinking for some time, he suddenly jumped on his mother's knee, threw his arms round her, and said, 'Oh yes, Mother, I am glad now that I'm not going to be a soldier; and you won't be disappointed about it either, will you, now you know the reason ?'

'I like you very much to give up your own wish, so as to make Cyril happy,' was his mother's answer.

'That is a good thing, then,' Alan now exclaimed with a deep-drawn sigh of relief; 'so we are all happy because I am now too. And do you know, Mother, Cyril and I have a secret that we're not going to tell (I'm really not going to this time) to any one. We made it up together. I wonder if Cyril is thinking about it now ?'

Could Alan's eyes have travelled nearly two hundred miles across country, he would have seen, whilst he spoke, his little invalid cousin lying in his 'Snuggery' at St. Aubyn's, and saying to his mother, in answer to a 'something' that she had just said to him, 'I mustn't tell you all why I am so happy, Mother, because part of it is a secret that Alan and I have made; but I'm most happy, because he isn't going to be a soldier any more.'

'Why do you not want Alan to be a soldier?' she asked.

'Because I shouldn't like him to go to battle, and fight

and kill people, and perhaps be killed,' Cyril answered ; 'and also because he wouldn't be able to come here often, as regiments aren't sent here—why aren't they, Mother?'

'Because this is not a garrison town.'

'What is a garrison town?'

'A fortified town, in which troops are stationed to protect her from the enemy.'

'Why don't they protect us too?'

'We are not on the sea-coast, and as Great Britain is an island, the enemy would have to come to us by boat; so all our garrison towns are along the sea-coast at places where foreign soldiers could or would be likely to land.'

'Alan has told me a good deal about forts, and castles, and batteries,' Cyril said ; 'and when he sees pictures of commanders in the *Graphic*, he knows all their names. But I didn't listen about them much ; though I'll listen better now he's not going to be a soldier himself.'

And such a happy look came into the boy's face whilst he spoke ; and this was just about the very same time that the serious one went out of Alan's, and the would-be quite happy one took its place.





CHAPTER VII.

OLE LUK-OIE'S LESSON TO THE CONVALESCENTS.



NELL is very ill,
so ill, indeed,
that nobody

thinks she will live; and her mother, as she sits beside her, looks dreadfully careworn and anxious, for Nell is very precious and could ill be spared. Alan is, and has been, ill too; but he has never been in danger, and is quite recovering now.

Miss Jeffreson is no longer with the Godfreys. Another year and a half have gone by, during which time both Nell and Alan have been to school, and Miss Jeffreson has gone to other little pupils. Both children returned about a fortnight ago for their summer holidays. When they came back, however, Alan was looking pale, and the next

morning complained of headache ; so he stayed in bed for breakfast, which Nell carried up to him, waiting upon him like the kind sister that she always was.

He did not seem to have much the matter with him, and his mother thought that he had either caught cold or a fit of laziness. Later in the day he got up, and Nell played with and amused him because he could not go out.

'Don't you wish you had a brother?' she asked during the afternoon ; 'because he could play with you so much better than I can.'

Alan put on a strange face, and did not answer.

Nell thought that this was because he wanted to say 'yes,' and was afraid he would offend her.

'Don't you wish I was a brother?' Nell then asked.

'Oh, no !' Alan exclaimed, now answering most readily. 'I like you a sister ever so much the best ; I couldn't like you anything different. And if you were a brother,' he went on, 'it isn't sure that you could play boy's games with me.'

Nell could not quite see what Alan meant, but since his last visit to St. Aubyn's he had said rather strange things sometimes, and they all seemed to have to do with the secret that Alan had never told and nobody had guessed.

But she was now satisfied, because Alan was also.

The headache came on again during the afternoon ; so directly after tea the little boy went back to bed, and asked Nell to read him off to sleep if she did not mind ; and of course she did not, for Nell seldom minded doing anything that was kind and useful.

The next day he was no better, so the Captain asked the doctor to kindly step in and see him, which he did ; and then, putting on a rather grave face, he said the boy was to be kept in bed until he came again, and that Nell was not to be allowed to go near him.

By the next visit there was no doubt as to what was the matter with Alan. He had a slight attack of scarlet fever—yes, a really very slight attack, but still it was scarlet fever.

But what about Nell ? The Captain and Mrs. Godfrey's first impulse was to send her away, if this were possible ; but matters were soon otherwise decided for them, for as they and the doctor walked into the dining-room to find her, she was seated at the table reading, with her hand to her forehead, trying to cool it ; and when they asked her how she felt, she complained of sickness and a pain in her throat, whereupon she, too, was ordered by the doctor to bed.

She showed quicker than Alan what was the matter with her, and her attack was to be much more severe.

But slight as was Alan's, he did not like bed at all ; and as day after day he lay there, and then later sat up for a little while, he wondered how Cyril could stand it. Ah ! he had pitied him, been sorry for him before, thought he had put himself in his position, but now he knew that he had not really done any of these things properly ; now forced to lie in bed, hour after hour, he thought of Cyril always having to lie down, and even to be strapped to his couch, and he could not be sorry enough for him.

Then he remembered the sick boy's patience, and, child

though he was, could not help contrasting his bad temper, and thinking how wicked and ungrateful he was ever to be cross.

'James was right,' he said to himself; 'there isn't a single thing like being well.' And then, for the first time for a whole year and a half, he asked for some soldiers to play with. Of these he had very many, but all this time they had been put aside, because it would have made him sad to play with them.

But now they gave him pleasure. Yes, Alan was so glad now that he had given up being a soldier for Cyril, that he did not mind any longer the soldiers reminding him of what he could not be.

'Yes,' he said to himself, 'I like to sort the regiments now. And perhaps when I go to see Cyril again, he won't mind any longer my telling him what colour facings the different regiments have, and showing him how I can put myself through my drills and paces. I'm as glad as I can be that I tried to go in Cyril's position then and gave up being a soldier. But I don't like stopping in it so long now,' he added, looking rather mournful.

The good mother was very busy with her two invalids, going from one to the other, a folding door just separating their two little rooms; and when Nell could spare her long enough, she would read for a short time to her little son, which he always liked very much.

'That is a lovely story, Mother dear,' he said one day when she was reading 'The Little Duke.' 'I wonder if Cyril's mother has ever read it to him? Do you know, I've been thinking that as he gives me so many toys I must give him some of my books, for he must be fond of them,

as he can't ever, ever, ever get up? But then he's got so many,' he added mournfully. 'There never seems to be anything for me to give him.'

'Not in the way of presents,' his mother answered.

Alan was then silent for a time.

'What are you thinking about?' she then asked.

'About something Cyril said.'

'What was that?'

'Well, do you know, Mother, he said last time I went there that he was so glad my hair was going to be cut short directly I got home, because I should be more like him? He wants me to be like him very much. Perhaps I am now I have to stay in bed. But I was thinking just now, Mother, that I wasn't much like Cyril inside me, because *he* never gets into rages. You know, I think he must have been a good bit shocked about the camp, don't you, though he didn't say he was; but shall I tell you what he did say?'

'Yes.'

'He said: "I wish you didn't get angry like that, Alan. It would frighten me if I saw you," and he said he should say in his prayers: "Pray God make my — Alan and me good boys," instead of "make me a good boy." I can't tell you the other word he said, because that's the secret. Do you know, Mother?' Alan then continued, 'I couldn't get cross when I'm with Cyril, because I couldn't let him see me.'

Mrs. Godfrey looked very gravely at her boy.

'Somebody always sees, you know,' she replied; 'always, Alan—Somebody Who made Cyril and gave him all the goodness, gentleness, and patience that he has; and Some-

body, my darling boy, Who would make you good and gentle too, if you would really ask Him to do so.'

'Yes, Mother, and the angels too! That's the worst part of it all, isn't it? But I can't help trying to be better for Cyril. Did you know I was trying, Mother?'

'Yes, I did; and you have improved very much lately.'

'Then I shouldn't wonder a bit if that's because Cyril says that in his prayers, should you, Mother?'

'No; I dare say that has a great deal to do with it.'

'But, Mother, I say something too that James told me to say, and that never comes.'

'What is that?'

'Make Cyril well,' the child replied sadly.

'You must add to that prayer if God will that he should become well. We know that it is God's will you should be a good boy; but it may be much better, for many reasons, that Cyril should remain ill, or even that he should not live to grow up.'

'What reasons?'

'God knows them, but we do not.'

Alan burst into a flood of tears.

'Oh, Mother!' he then said, 'I do love Cyril so much.'

'And God loves him a thousand times better than you or anybody else can love him; therefore we must trust Him to do what is best for Cyril, which we feel sure He will do. God loves little children very dearly whom He causes to be ill; and He comforts Cyril too, you know, and makes up to him for what he loses.'

'Yes, He does that,' Alan said with assurance.

The next day the little boy was to get up for a short time, but in the adjoining room a decided change was taking

place for the worse ; it was then that Nell was so ill, and for two days afterwards she seemed to hover between life and death. Her case required most careful, anxious watching and nursing. She had been a most considerate little patient throughout her illness, and could not bear to give the slightest unnecessary trouble.

The first day that she was taken ill, she said to her mother : ' Don't come into the room at all, as it is so catching, and don't let anybody else come. Couldn't you just have all the things put down outside that I want, and I will fetch them ? '

Mrs. Godfrey smiled, and told Nell that she would nurse her entirely herself, and let nobody else run any risks. ' Other people shall put things outside, if you like, and I will bring them in to you and Alan ; but, you know, I could not stay away, darling. If I were ill, would my Nell like me to wait upon myself ? '

' Oh no,' was the quick reply, ' I should want to wait upon you ; but I hope you won't catch the fever too, Mother. '

' I do not think I shall. Mothers do not very often, I believe, catch illnesses from their children ; so do not worry your little head about me, but try to do everything that Dr. Seagrove and I tell you to do, so as to get well again as soon as possible. '

And this Nell had done ; but now, when this crisis came, it seemed almost as though she were never to get well again.

Hour after hour her father and mother watched beside her, fearing the very worst ; and when, towards evening, Alan was wrapped in a shawl and carried in to see and kiss his sister, she did not know him at all.

It was a terrible time of anxiety, but at length a slight

change for the better came, which was most thankfully welcomed; and then 'the worst' became a thing of the past altogether, and Nell began gradually to amend. But her illness was a very long one, and her holidays were extended to the whole of the following term.

Alan also was not received back into school for some time. When he had recovered and his sister was still weak, he was very kind and attentive to her, and many a quiet game did they play, and many an interesting book did they read together.

'Does Ole Luk-Oie ever come and see you?' Alan asked suddenly one day.

'Old who?'

'No, not old,—“*Ole Luk-Oie.*”'

'I never heard of him before; who is he?'

'One of the dearest old men there is, I should think,' Alan answered. 'He goes to boys and girls when they are in bed, and tells them stories—beautiful stories they must be, for no one knows so many stories as Ole Luk-Oie, you know; and of course he'd choose the best. I think he came to me once or twice when I was ill.'

'How did you know about him?' Nell asked.

'Well, a little boy at school had a book of "Hans Andersen's *Fairy Tales*," and he lent them to me one day, and I read about him there. This boy is something like Cyril, although he isn't ill. He doesn't like fairy tales as a rule, he says; but Hans Andersen's *Fairy Tales* all mean something, so he likes reading those sometimes very much, and I like them too.

'Ole Luk-Oie went to one little boy every day for a week—I forget the boy's name; and on Monday,' when he

was clearing up, he heard a sad wail of a noise in a table drawer ; and when he went to it, he found the slate in convulsions because a wrong number had got into the boy's sum, and the pencil was tugging and jumping at its string as though it had been a little dog wanting to help the sum and couldn't, and in the copy-book also were great lamentations. On each page the great letters stood in a row one underneath the other, and each with a little one at its side ; that was the copy ; and next to these were a few more letters which thought they looked just like the first, and these Hjalmar—oh, yes ! that's the boy's name—had written ; but they were lying down just as if they had tumbled over the pencil lines on which they were to stand.

"See, this is how you should hold yourselves," said the copy. "Look, sloping in this way, with a powerful swing."

"Oh, we should be very glad to do that," replied Hjalmar's letters ; "but we cannot : we are too weakly."

"Then you must take medicine," said Ole Luk-Oie.

"Oh, no !" cried they, and they immediately stood up so gracefully that it was beautiful to behold.

"Yes," said Ole Luk-Oie ; "now I cannot tell any stories I must exercise them. One, two ! one two !" and thus (like a sergeant, put in Alan) he exercised the letters ; and they stood quite slender and as beautiful as any copy can be. But when Ole Luk-Oie went away, and Hjalmar looked at them next morning, they were as weak and miserable as ever.

"Thank you, Alan," said Nell as he finished, for he could not remember what Ole Luk-Oie had told Hjalmar on the other days of the week, 'I like the story very much, and it does mean a great deal certainly.'

'And in the book,' Alan said, 'there's a picture of Ole Luk-Oie coming to Hjalmar. He sits on children's beds at night to tell them stories, you know. I should not wonder if he often goes to Cyril; but I wonder why he always tells his stories at night?'

'Because it is dreams that they have. That's what it means, I expect. But how did you remember the story so well, and that long name?'

'I read it a number of times, and I said the name over to myself twenty times at least, I should think; and I almost fancy Ole Luk-Oie must have come and reminded me about it again when I was ill, for I remember it better than ever now.'

'Shall we play now,' Nell said soon afterwards, 'at my setting you a sum, and you doing it?'

'Should I have to do it right?' Alan asked.

'Oh yes, you must try to; but it shall be easy.'

'All right,' he answered, and then Alan went to look for a slate on which he used to do sums before he went to school, and which, poor thing, must have often had convulsions, or have wanted to have them, if a wrong number, finding its way on to it, was likely to give them, for Alan was particularly stupid over sums.

He did this sum now, however, and proved it. The next day he did a more difficult one, for Nell, being clever at figures, helped him to get them right, and showed him an easy way to conquer them alone; till, by degrees, during the long holidays of the two invalids, Alan learnt how to work one sum, and then one rule of sums after another, until, when he went back to school, instead of being a regular dunce at sums, he was really quick at them

and instead of finding himself every day at the bottom of his form for arithmetic, he really often managed to struggle nearly to the top.

Mental arithmetic also they did together, half in play, half in earnest, until Alan was also quite quick at his pounds, shillings, and pence table.

And Nell too kept him in countenance. She was not clever at everything; what child is? If she were quick at figures, she was very backward for her age at spelling, and she also wrote badly; so day by day part of her occupation and amusement was now to write copies very, very carefully, and to copy favourite pieces out of books, watching the long and difficult words that puzzled her, until she left off making mistakes in them, and did the dictation that her mother gave her better and more free from faults every day.

And this was, instead of a painful task to either of them, a very pleasing recreation, they both agreed, and a capital way to pass the time of their very long vacation.

So 'Ole Luk-Oie' had taught Nell and Alan something really useful, and Hans Andersen's *Fairy Tale* had meant and done something very real for them. The convulsions that Hjalmar's slate had had, went far towards keeping convulsions out of Alan's, and his weakly letters also helped Nell's to grow strong; so Alan had read, remembered, and told again so well the story of 'Ole Luk-Oie's visit to Hjalmar' on that Monday night to very good purpose; and had the old man visited these children in their beds, I am sure he must have thought them worthy of hearing very pretty tales, who had so willingly put their own letters and figures through their drill.



CHAPTER VIII.

MARGERY.



WHEN Uncle Cyril insisted upon anything, it was a well-known fact that that upon which he insisted came to pass; and as he now insisted upon Nell and Alan going to St. Aubyn's, to regain some of the strength that they had lost in the fever, to St. Aubyn's they accordingly went, as soon as they were considered quite free from infection.

Although Nell and Alan were always a little home-sick when they went away from their father and mother for ever so short a time, they were both delighted at the prospect of paying another visit to dear St. Aubyn's, to see again the dear kind aunt and uncle, the dear little cousins, the lovely country, and the friendly but respectful country

people, for whom Nell, even at ten years old, had conceived an admiration, and whose acquaintance she would be glad to renew ; and last and best of all, Alan and Cyril would meet again after a separation of nearly two years.

Then, too, Mrs. Godfrey herself required thorough rest and change after the fatigues she had undergone in nursing her children. The change she would have, as her husband's regiment was now under orders to move to Aldershot, and 'the rest' was to follow directly afterwards.

Nell was looking very pale when she arrived at St. Aubyn's, and Alan also seemed, this visit, to have left his roses behind.

It was three years and a half since Nell had seen her little cousins, so she found them very much grown. The twins, who were now seven, had been exalted to the schoolroom, and so had Donald, for two hours in the morning. Hyacinth, whom she had not seen before, was two and a half years old. Miss Evans, the children's governess, had now gone away for a month to help to nurse her mother, who was ill ; and during her absence Mr. St. Aubyn had wished to procure the services of another lady for his little girls, but as their cousins were coming to see them, their kind mother had begged for a complete holiday, saying that she and the nurses would together share the extra looking after them. Cyril was still on his back, ay, and now his fond parents knew all about it—knew the worst : how that their boy would never be any better on this side the grave, would never stand again until he stood in company with the little ones, redeemed, beyond it.

But he was so happy now with Alan come back. And after that little boy had been at St. Aubyn's a few days, he wrote home a long letter to his mother (and he could write a proper letter now), telling 'all about Cyril,' as he said afterwards; and this 'all about' told of frequent pain, of a very thin Cyril now, but of the straps and weight some time ago removed because they could do no real good.

'She's a horrid, cross, disagreeable thing!' Little Margery St. Aubyn was making this ugly remark early one morning, and, as she made it, she looked as though she were dreadfully dissatisfied about something or other. 'Isn't she?' she repeated.

Kathleen, to whom Margery spoke, made no reply.

'Well, I don't see why we should do her work,' Margery began again, 'we're not housemaids. And I want to go into the garden with Nell and the others—that's what I want to do, I tell you,' and Margery looked at poor little Kathleen as though she had set her the task to do that was causing her so much displeasure; but Kathleen still said nothing.

'I wish you'd just be cross about it too,' the ill-tempered child went on; 'it would be ever so much better then. She is the *crossesst*, *unkindest*, *disagreeablest* thing there is; and now I shan't be able to see if any more of my China-asters have come out before breakfast. I shan't be a bit quick; I shall just be as slow as I possibly can,' and as Margery spoke she folded her arms; and the face of that one little girl sitting upon the floor reflected, I am afraid, a very stubborn little heart.

'As I've got to do it,' said Kathleen, who spoke at last,

'I shall be as quick as I can ; and then, perhaps, I may still be able to go out with Nell for a little time before breakfast,' and as she spoke she set herself in real earnest to do—what do you think ? Just to pick up little bits of paper from off the floor.

Last evening Nell had spent with the Hollands, Cyril's doctor's little daughters, and the twins had spent it with their good old nurse Davies in the nursery. Of late they had found a new way of amusing themselves, or rather Miss Evans had found it for them. She had given them a book called *The Girl's Own Toy-Maker*, and from it, with Miss Evans' help, they had learnt to cut out all sorts of paper and card-board toys ; indeed, they had one little round table in the schoolroom which was called 'the paper-table,' because nothing but these toys stood upon it—a perambulator, chairs, tables, an arm-chair, mulberry-bush dolls, a cottage with a gate and fence, a wash-hand stand, and other treasures. And this was a charming amusement for the children. But Miss Evans had told them, when they cut out, to be careful with the little pieces of paper, and had shown them how to spread a piece of oilcloth, that she kept on purpose, out on the table to catch these pieces as they fell ; but they had forgotten to do this last night ; and when the under-nurse-maid, Sarah, went to sweep the room, before breakfast, in the morning, she found it literally strewn with little bits of paper, and also with small beads with which likewise they had played. Nurse had begged them to be careful over-night, and most of the litter had been really made whilst she was out of the room putting Hyacinth to bed. But Sarah had not time to pick up all these bits of paper.

Meals had to be very punctually served at the Hall, and there was just time for Sarah's ordinary work before breakfast and no more ; so Nurse sent the two little young ladies to pick up the bits of paper, that they had let fall, whilst Sarah did something else, and this was the cause of Margery's discontent and ill-humour.

'It may make them a little more careful too, next time, if they see what trouble it gives,' Nurse had said.

'I shall tell Mother what Sarah has given us to do,' Margery soon began again, 'and then she'll see if she can order us about like this.'

'I thought it was Nurse who told us,' answered Kathleen gently, while a most contented little face looked up from the ground, so different from that of Margery, who sat opposite to her, that there could be no doubt at that moment which was to be preferred—the very pretty face that wore a scowl so often, or the one whose prettiness consisted of the gentle love and good-nature which shone forth from it.

'Well, then, Nurse oughtn't to tell us to do it either ; it isn't our work.'

'Don't you think as we've got to do it, that we'd better try to be as quick as we can?' Kathleen replied. 'And then we might still have a little time with Nell before breakfast. She isn't in the garden yet. Look, I have done a good part of my work.' Nurse Davies had very fairly divided the task.

But Margery still sat on and grumbled ; and when her little fingers even picked up a piece of paper, they naughtily threw it down again, so that, when Kathleen's share of the work was quite done, Margery's was not even begun.

'If you really like to work hard now, Margery,' Kathleen went on, 'I will help you to do your side, and we should soon get it done together; but if you sit like that, and won't do a thing else, it's no use my doing any more, because it will be too much for me.'

'Sarah must do it, I tell you,' Margery replied, getting off the floor and defiantly seating herself upon a chair.

'Perhaps Sarah hasn't time, as she has the "little ones" to dress and to bring up breakfast.'

'Donald partly dresses himself now, and she doesn't do any of our hair, because Nurse does that.'

How could Margery waste all this precious time in such silly argument? She must surely have jumped out of bed on the wrong side this morning!

'Look! I've begun your side,' poor little Kathleen then said, doing all she could to encourage Margery to be good and sensible. 'Do come and help me, because it will soon be breakfast-time, and the garden does look so lovely and beautiful!'

Margery then ran to the window, saying as she stood there: 'And it's that horrid Sarah's fault that we aren't in it. I hate her—that I do!'

I cannot think where and how Margery had learnt to be so naughty, for all those with whom she had to do were so very kind and good,—Father, Mother, Miss Evans, Nurse, everybody in fact,—too kind and good to her if possible, who sometimes really seemed herself to *try* to be very naughty.

As Margery stood looking out of the window, the door opened and Nurse came in. As we can imagine, she was very angry with Margery, who, she could see at a glance, had done none of the task that she had set her; but she

was also very pleased with Kathleen, whom she sent into the garden, while the naughty child was threatened that she should have no breakfast until she obeyed. And do you know, Margery liked her breakfast so much ; indeed, all her meals were so very welcome to this little girl that the fear of seeing that threat carried into execution at last brought her to obedience.

Any punishment but one connected with food Margery could bear quite easily ; and this was also rather ugly in her, for it showed that she was a greedy little girl. Nurse knew all about this too.

Kind little Kathleen was very sorry to leave her sister, but Nurse must be obeyed ; so, going down-stairs, she soon found Nell in the conservatory waiting for her and Margery, who, she said, she was beginning to think were not coming at all before breakfast.

‘What have you been doing all this time ?’ she asked.

‘Picking up bits of paper that we dropped last night when you were out,’ was the answer.

‘And where is Margery ?’

‘She has not done her side yet,’ Kathleen replied truthfully ; but she said no more. Kathleen never told tales.

When Margery had picked the last bit of paper from off the floor, she went again to the window, from where she saw Nell, Kathleen, Donald, and Hyacinth having a beautiful run ; for it was autumn weather now, and the short quarter of an hour in the garden before breakfast was generally spent in running. They looked such a happy group, and it was too late now for her to join them. What a silly child she had been ! But she did not think so, and still only blamed Nurse and Sarah.

'I wonder where Alan is?' she said to herself; 'I suppose with Cyril, as he isn't out there.'

Now that Miss Evans was away, there was no school-room breakfast, and the twins were supposed to have theirs in the nursery at eight o'clock; but to-day it was not until a quarter-past eight, and Margery was to blame for this delay.

'What a beautiful rose you have got!' she said to her twin sister as she came in. 'Is that out of your own part of the conservatory?'

'Yes; and it's for Cyril, and it's his favourite of all—a *Gloire*— Oh, Nell told me the name of it,' she then said, 'and now I've quite forgotten again all but *Gloire*; and I said it very often,' poor little Kathleen murmured, 'to try to remember,' but it had run right away from her memory; and until she saw Nell again, after breakfast, who then told her once more, she was ransacking a poor little empty head, as it seemed, to no purpose to find the name of Cyril's favourite yellow rose, which was *Gloire de Dijon*. 'May I take it to Cyril, Nurse,' Kathleen then asked, 'before it fades at all?'

She was allowed to do so. Exceptions to rules were often made in Cyril's favour. His flowers should lose none of their freshness before he had them.

'I wish I had a rose for Cyril too,' Margery said when Kathleen came back; 'I suppose you didn't give it between us?'

'Yes, I did; I said between us all,' was the generous little child's reply. 'And Cyril did look so happy, and Alan's having breakfast with him.'

'Oh, I wish I'd seen them,' said Margery. This little

girl was so often wishing for something or other that she did not possess, and it was unfortunately so often her own fault when pleasures were withheld from her.

‘If you please, Nurse,’ Mrs. St. Aubyn’s maid then said, looking in, ‘prayers will be in Master Cyril’s room this morning.’

When Miss Evans was at home, prayers were generally in the schoolroom, just before the dining-room breakfast, which was at nine o’clock, when Cyril, if well enough, was wheeled in for them ; but sometimes during the holidays they were in his own little ‘Snuggery,’ which pleased him very much.

Directly prayers were over this morning, Mrs. St. Aubyn called Margery to her, and said, ‘How was it, Margery, that I did not see you with the others in the garden this morning?’

Margery looked down as though she were half-ashamed of herself.

‘After breakfast, come and tell me all about it,’ then said her mother. ‘You will most likely see your father go out, and then come to me directly. If you do not see him go, I will send Nell for you. Come along now, Nell, at once to breakfast,’ Mrs. St. Aubyn then said to her niece, who was talking to Cyril and his father.

‘It was Sarah’s fault,’ muttered Margery, but her mother took no notice of the remark ; and the dining-room party then went down to their breakfast, Mrs. St. Aubyn saying :

‘As it is now so fine, Nurse, and looks as though it might rain later, I should like all the children to go at

once into the garden, except Master Alan, who may either go, or stay with Cyril, as he likes.'

He chose to stay; and the two boys were soon settled by the window very happily together, whither dear Cyril was wheeled. But Alan, after a little while, saw him wipe a tear from his eyes; then he knelt down beside him, and kissed him by way of comfort.

'Donald's quite a big boy now,' the invalid child then said; 'and I'm very glad that he is, as he must be glad; and I shouldn't wonder if he goes to school soon too. And he says Father has begun to teach him cricket and football; and I'm glad he has too, because Donald is so glad. But oh, oh! I can't do anything but lie down; and I should like to so, so much.'

Cyril wiped many tears away now; he seemed very, very sad this morning. Every now and then he felt a little better; this he felt to-day, because it was a clear, bright day. Damp weather brought rheumatic pains. And when he felt a little better, he did so want to be much better, to go out and play like other boys, and not always lie still; and I suppose watching Donald, thinking what a big, strong boy he was growing, who was four years younger than himself, made some of the sad, not envious, thoughts come, for they were not envious at all, only very sad; and then Cyril spoke his thought out to his dear — Alan, into whose eyes tears of sympathy also came.

He was so sorry for Cyril. It had been so dreadful, after the fever, to stay in bed a few weeks; and Cyril had to lie on his couch every day, and every week, and every month, and every year, and always. He was sometimes very cheerful, and almost always resigned; but every now

and then, like this morning, the child's heavy cross seemed to weigh most heavily upon him ; and it was a very heavy cross for a little boy to bear.

The yellow rose that Kathleen had gathered for her brother was on the window-sill. Cyril loved flowers very dearly ; and Kathleen had often told him that she was sure they loved him too, because all the special ones in her garden, that she was growing especially for him, got on so beautifully.

'I bring 'ou rose too, out of my darden, when I tum in,' Hyacinth had said to Cyril that morning ; 'but 'ou mustn't tall me flower any more, as I big girl now.' Cyril often told Hyacinth that she must be a flower herself, as she had a flower's name ; and that he thought she would look so pretty planted in a pot.

The two boys now caught sight of the little girl toddling round her bed.

'I do believe,' Alan said, 'that she's going to bring you in a sun-flower to-day. She does love sunflowers so much, and she does so wish, she says, that hyacinths wouldn't ever be gone. And look, Cyril, she's just putting a bit of paper over the sun-flower ! She told me yesterday, when I asked her why she put so many little bits of paper over her bed, that she put them over all the "towers she had choosed for Cyril."' Alan laughed out loud, and Cyril was obliged to laugh too.

'How kind *everybody* is, Alan,' he then said. 'I won't cry,' he went on, 'if you won't,' for a tear of sympathy still glittered in Alan's eye. 'And do you know what Nell told me yesterday ?—that you hardly ever had tempers now. I was so glad.'

'When I'm nearly going to have them, I think of you,' Alan answered, 'and then something helps me not to let them come.'

'I expect it's somebody, and the Somebody is God, Alan,' Cyril said reverently.

'And I feel so ashamed,' the other went on, 'when I'm cross, because I know you would be ashamed for me, and you are so good and patient.'

'But don't you know, Alan, often I'm not like just now? You must say in your prayers, "Pray God make my . . . Cyril very patient."' The one word Cyril whispered, but Alan knew what it was, and said he would say it just like that.

Then both boys laughed again, because Cinthy had fetched a large sheet of paper and seemed to be covering her whole bed with little bits of it, that she tore off.

This was such a funny thought of the little girl's, to cover all Cyril's flowers with paper.

'I wonder James lets her do it,' said Cyril, 'as it must make the garden look untidy.'

'I expect she tells him they're for you, and then he'd let her do anything.'

'Everybody *is* kind,' Cyril repeated. 'I can't think how I can ever cry because I can't walk too, as I did just now.'

Alan did not answer, but only thought how much he would wish to walk if the power to do so were ever to be taken from him.

The next thing that the boys saw was Mr. St. Aubyn going out, and waving them an adieu, and then Margery going all alone in-doors. Mr. St. Aubyn never passed the

'Snuggery' window without looking up for Cyril. He did not often pass it without running up to have a word with his little son.

'Well, Margery,' her mother said as that little girl came to her in a still half-defiant manner, 'what have you been doing to-day, dear, that is wrong? Come and tell me quickly, as I want to go up to our poor old Cyril as soon as possible, so that Alan may go for a walk with your father, who says that he can take him to-day. How is it that you were not in the garden with Kathleen before breakfast this morning?'

'Because Sarah said I was to do her work,' answered the naughty little girl, 'and I wasn't going to do it. We're not housemaids, Mother, are we?'

'What was it that Sarah wished you to do?' asked Mrs. St. Aubyn.

'To clear up the nursery floor.'

'To clear what from off it?'

Margery pouted. 'Paper and beads,' she said.

'Who threw the paper and beads upon the floor?'

'We dropped them. But then it isn't *our* place to pick them up; it's Sarah's.'

'I do not think it is,' said Mrs. St. Aubyn. 'It is Sarah's place to sweep and dust the nursery; but it is our place to show Sarah, and everybody else, consideration, and not to give unnecessary trouble. If you throw beads and little pieces of paper upon the floor, it is quite right that you should pick them up. Sarah has only time to do her own work properly in the early morning, if she gets breakfast in time; and you know how very particular your father is that that should always be punctual.'

Besides, Margery, it is not for a little girl like you to argue what you should, or what you should not do. It is for you to obey Nurse; and I am quite sure that Sarah would not have asked you to pick up the pieces if Nurse had not also wished you to do it.'

'They both said it,' answered Margery; 'one was as disagreeable as the other.'

'That is not the way to speak, Margery,' said her mother. 'And there is another way to look at it also. If you were Sarah, do you think you would like to have to clear up off the floor a number of little bits of paper that untidy children threw down upon it? I am sure you would not. And I hope having had to clear it up yourself to-day will make you think about this, and be more careful another time. But what about Kathleen? Did she not spill any pieces of paper?'

'Yes; but I suppose she liked to pick hers up.'

'That means that she did pick them up when told to do so; that she liked to be an obedient little girl. Oh, Margery, my darling child, why cannot you like to be good too? Why am I so often hearing that you are a naughty, instead of a good, child?'

'You did not tell me to do it,' Margery murmured. She was so very fond of making idle excuses.

'But I have told you to obey Nurse; so whenever you disobey her you disobey me as well, and all disobedience is naughty.'

Margery was now silent.

'Oh, my child,' her mother then said as she drew this very naughty little girl towards her, 'if you only knew how deeply you grieved your good father and myself by this

constant wilfulness, I think you would be sorry and try to be a better child. And Who else, Margery, does naughtiness grieve, even more than it grieves poor father and mother?’

‘God,’ she replied.

‘Yes, God, who has given you so many blessings, health for one thing; and do we not know, by only too sad experience of the contrast, what a blessing health is? What would you do, I wonder, if you were like Cyril? And with the gifts of health, loving, indulgent parents, a beautiful home, every happiness which you could desire, all yours, you are constantly wilful and ungrateful!’

‘But I don’t like to do Sarah’s work,’ still persisted Margery.

‘I have told you,’ said her mother gently, ‘that it was your work and not hers, so do not answer again; and instead of now being sorry for your disobedience, it seems that you still prefer to go on being naughty. You cannot love me, Margery; for you know how sad it makes me always to have to punish you, and of course I must do this again to-day. Go and sit quite quietly on that chair by the wall until the others come in from the garden.’

Margery obeyed. Her mother, knowing that this would be a great punishment, thought that she would cry. But no such thing. The stolid little child sat down, to all appearances, quite unconcernedly, and folded her hands across her lap.

As Mrs. St. Aubyn was anxious to get to Cyril, she left Margery, and asked Nurse to look in from the garden, every now and then, to see that she was all right.

O little Margery, sitting in that chair so contentedly

I wonder, if you had seen your good mother wipe tears from her eyes as she went out of the room, which your naughtiness had brought into them, whether the sight would have melted your stony little heart, and have made you cry too?

Your mother loves you so dearly, thinks so much and so often, 'What can I do to make my children good and happy?' and you only grieve her in return. She is sad because Cyril is ill, so you should try to comfort her and not give her greater sorrows.

Meanwhile the other children were playing so happily outside together, and Margery might all the time have been with them but for—for what? For the pleasure, can we say?—oh! surely not! but for the pain of being naughty, which she inflicted upon herself.





CHAPTER IX.

'THE LAD.'



FOR more than an hour did little Margery sit on that chair in the dining-room, in punishment; but even at the end of that hour, when her mother went to release her, she showed no signs of penitence whatever; she was so naughtily stubborn.

She seemed to be most ashamed of herself, however, when Nell later on was playing with her and Kathleen, and told her how sorry she was that twice already that day she had not been able to

be in the garden with her. Margery thought very much of Nell, and did not at all like her to know when she was naughty.

Mrs. St. Aubyn remained for a while with Cyril, and

Alan had his walk, which he afterwards called a splendid one. Before he returned, Hyacinth came in laden, and Cyril did so wish that she had waited to come until Alan had returned; but the two boys laughed over her visit together after Alan did come back.

She brought the sun-flower quite spoilt, four dahlias without any stalks at all, ever so many China-asters in a very similar condition, mignonette pulled up by the roots, almost every variety of flower that grew upon her bed, with few exceptions—all destroyed; and in the bouquet there was also a good deal of grass.

'She could hardly walk, she had such a bundle,' Cyril said, 'and kept on tumbling down upon the flowers, which were all crushed together anyhow; and when she came in, her face was as red almost as a geranium, and she called out, "Ook, Cyril, dose all for you; aren't ou dad?" I wish you'd seen, Alan,' Cyril added.

He wished he had, too. Alan was very fond of this little cousin, and thought her the funniest little thing he had ever seen in his life.

The afternoon was very wet, and Alan spent most of it in the 'Snuggery.' When he went in, he found the *Child's Bible* lying near to Cyril, open at page thirty-two, showing the picture of the boy Ishmael lying down upon the ground.

'I want you to read this to me, please, Alan,' Cyril said at once. 'I am so fond of this chapter and this picture, and I want to see if you like them too. It does seem beautiful to me. You know I have to lie down something like that; and if you read it, you will soon see, I expect, why else I like it.'

Alan then began where Cyril wished. "And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept. And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is."

'That will do, thank you, Alan,' said Cyril. 'Do you think you see now why it is so beautiful?'

Alan considered.

A boy who could always run about could not be expected to find in these few verses all the beauties that Cyril, who could never do so, found in them, for whom they almost seemed to have been written.

"The lad" is like your name,' said Alan.

'Yes; but don't you know, too, Ishmael was lying down, and was so tired that he could not speak out loud; and God heard his whisper-voice, and sent His angel to take care of him? Oh, I do like to look at Ishmael so much, lying down there! And the angel said God heard him *where he is*, so that shows He hears me where I am too, and when I say, "Pray God, help my——Alan not to be cross." You know, Alan, my mother cries too, sometimes. I expect she wouldn't like me to die, if I were to; and Ishmael's mother didn't want him to die either, and the angel said to her, "Fear not." I hope he'll say "Fear not" to my mother too, don't you, Alan? Now read on again, please, as there's more nice coming.'

"Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand ; for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water ; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad to drink. And God was with the lad ; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer."

'*God was with the lad*,' Cyril repeated. 'That's the part I like. Now, Alan, don't you just think that "The Lad" is a better name than Master Cyril? and mustn't Ishmael have been glad when the water came, because he was very thirsty?'

'Yes ; I expect he was. But how did you find that story?'

'My mother read it to me.'

'Do you think "the lad" was nearly nine?' Alan then asked.

'No ; my mother says he was about thirteen.'

'I don't think he looks as big as *us* in the picture,' Alan remarked.

'I don't think he does, either ; but it doesn't matter really that he wasn't nearly nine. Do you think it does, Alan?'

'I don't think it does ; but it is beautiful, isn't it, that we're always the same age together? I am so glad you are.'

'So am I,' answered Cyril.

'It must have seemed funny, I should think,' Alan then said, 'for that "the lad" to live in the wilderness. I wonder he wasn't a soldier.'

Cyril looked grave and thoughtful.

'Do you still want to be that?' he asked.

‘No, not a bit now,’ was the quick reply. ‘I like to be going to write your letters much better, and help you and read to you. Do I help you now, do you think?’

Cyril could not say *how* much his cousin helped him, but he answered: ‘You do a lot for me; and when you’re here, it isn’t half so bad to have to lie down. But, Alan, if you want to be a soldier very much, I won’t stop you; you can be one.’

‘I don’t want it now, I tell you.’

Cyril sometimes wondered if he had been very selfish to make his cousin give him this promise, and, little boy though he still was, he thought every now and then that he would never have any grown-up letters to write, that he would never be grown up at all now.

‘Where’s Nell?’ he then asked her brother.

‘She’s gone out with Uncle to the Library and all sorts of places: she does like to go about with Uncle to see all the people; and then she is going to have tea with the Hollands. They went out in the closed carriage, but it was nearly leaving off raining.’

‘Dr. Holland’s children are all older than *us*,’ Cyril said. ‘Clara is the youngest, and she is nearly twelve.’

‘I hope Nell will find one of your flowers somewhere to bring you home,’ Alan then remarked. ‘I wonder if that “the lad” had those for his flowers too?’

‘I don’t know,’ was the answer; ‘but Alan,’ Cyril suddenly exclaimed, ‘I want to see you climb a tree; so will you ask James to start you on one as near to this window as he can?’

‘But wouldn’t you want to do it too?’ asked Alan.

‘No, I shouldn’t,’ he answered decidedly. ‘And I want

to see Donald play at cricket too ; so please tell Father, directly he comes in, that I've a favour to ask him ; and I shall ask him to play with Donald soon quite near here. It will be fun to see him !'

'If you want us to,' said Alan doubtfully, but he could not help wondering very much what about 'in Cyril's position' now !

The sick child seemed to be very much changed of late, and when well enough to do so, took an interest in, and wanted to know, all that the others did, and the knowledge no longer pained him. He could watch an out-door game without a wish arising for strength to be able to share in it, feeling all pleasure and no pain the while.

Young child though he was, he really seemed now to have made up his mind that he must patiently lie still whilst others played about, and from his couch in the window he shared their happiness.

Alan, too, would really have astonished his mother by the famous little nurse that he had become ; and he was even trusted sometimes to look at the clock, and give Cyril jelly or some other refreshment at the right time. Cyril's nurse was now down-stairs.

'The clock's just where Aunt said it was to be when you had to have some more jelly,' Alan said softly as he gave his cousin some with a spoon ; 'so you will take it now, won't you?'

Cyril generally liked Alan to wait upon him, and he showed this and his gratitude by almost always taking what he gave him.

'I think I'm going to sleep a little bit now, Alan,'

Cyril said softly after he had finished the jelly; 'what shall you do, do you think?'

'Sit here and look at pictures. Then I shall know if you wake and want me again to talk to you, or to read, or play, or give you anything; because you might, mightn't you, when you woke?'

Cyril smiled assent, and the next moment he had dropped off to sleep, with Alan watching beside him. If Alan had not been so good a little nurse, he would not have been allowed to be so much with Cyril, who was really very ill; but the strong boy seemed always to know when he might and when he might not talk to his invalid cousin, and took great care not to tire him. Cyril was so very thin now, seemed almost to be wasting away; and yet at times there was no pain at all, and then the child's good spirits often made him appear stronger than he really was.





CHAPTER X.

POLITICAL ECONOMY.



‘THE boy must really have a wonderful constitution to have lasted as long as he has,’ Mrs. Godfrey said one morning to her husband after receiving a letter from St. Aubyn’s, which told of Cyril, within a few days, having taken a change for the worse, and having asked incessantly for them all to come and

spend Nell’s and Alan’s next summer holidays with him, which he reckoned would begin in a fortnight’s time.

‘Yes,’ answered her husband; ‘but I am afraid if the boy is so perceptibly worse now, that we may really have cause to fear that he will not last much longer. Of course you must all go. I will apply for ten days’ leave. More I could not

hope to obtain in the drill season, and then, all going well, as soon as Nell and Alan turn up from school, we will start at once. It is good of the dear boy to think of us, and they all seem to want us to go.'

'There is never any fear of a warm welcome there,' was the reply; and certainly, when the family party arrived, three weeks later, it was, if possible, warmer even than it had ever been before.

The boy cousins were now nearly eleven years old, and Nell nearly sixteen. It was therefore about a year and a half since Cyril and Alan had met.

'I expect Kathleen and Margery will think me quite grown up,' Nell said on the journey; 'of course I am very old compared to them.'

Alan was a splendid little fellow now, a 'regular little man,' his uncle called him; but dear Cyril was very perceptibly weaker, and was never wheeled from his two rooms at all now. The delicate, patient little face had aged very little since Nell last saw it, but an almost heavenly smile seemed to have come into that pale little face. Incessant care, the best of new milk and new-laid eggs, every suitable nourishment that he could be coaxed to take—these had helped to keep alive the little sunken frame, that still clung to life in so wonderful a manner; but those who knew and loved the child best did not think that he would now cling to it much longer, and he himself spoke very differently of the future to Alan, from what he had generally spoken about it to him.

Nell and Alan were both favourites at St. Aubyn's, and upon their arrival were met by many a kind greeting as they passed along the roads.

Nell said she was sure that every time she came here everything seemed to be more beautiful than it had been before, and there was something new to admire about the people; but then, of course, every time that Nell came she was older, and therefore better able to be appreciative, and to discover beauties which were hidden from her before. And yet she was right: at St. Aubyn's some improvement or another was always being wrought.

Dear Cyril, ill though he was, thanked his uncle, so soon as he arrived, very prettily and gratefully, for coming and bringing them all to see him; but visits to the 'Snuggery' had now to be paid carefully, and it was not thought wise for more than two people ever to be with Cyril at once, and nobody stayed long enough there to tire him at all. Alan's were the longest of everybody's visits besides Cyril's father's and mother's, because Cyril loved so much to have him with him; and Alan had already also shown that he could well be trusted never to talk when his cousin seemed tired or likely to go to sleep.

There was another Alan, too, now. Yes; our Alan had heard the news at school, but had never made any remark upon it, for fear there should be a disappointment again.

Mr. and Mrs. St. Aubyn had another little son six months ago, and Cyril had begged for him to be christened 'Alan Cyril,' and to please him alone had this name been given to the baby. And the little 'Alan Cyril' was also, at his request, brought into the 'Snuggery' when the Godfreys arrived, for them all to see him there first.

He thought Alan would be so glad to see and have this new Alan cousin; and so he was: how glad we can

measure a little by the little fellow's bitter grief five years and a half ago when the other baby namesake died ; and this one was not only his namesake, but Cyril's too—'a new little brother,' Cyril whispered, 'between us both.'

Nell heard the whisper, but could not quite understand what it meant.

'Do you know, Uncle,' Nell said one day after she had returned from a visit to the tenantry, which her uncle had allowed her to make with him, 'the people here do make me think so much of Political Economy ! I believe they must all have studied it.'

'Bravo !' exclaimed the great land proprietor ; 'bravo to our little Nell, both for having studied Political Economy herself, and for having discovered benefits that we have derived from it ! Why, Nell,' he went on, 'you never told me that that was one of your accomplishments.'

'What is Political Economy ?' Kathleen asked, who was in the room at the time.

'Nell shall tell us,' said her father ; 'but I am afraid you are rather little to understand.'

Kathleen did not think that she was, and looked as though she would listen very attentively. But before Nell began, Alan and Margery came in. They had been with their mothers for a little while in the garden, but when those ladies sat down there to work, they thought that they would come in to see what the others were doing. Cyril was asleep.

Alan took up his position on his uncle's knee ; Margery went round to Nell's other side, who then asked :

'May I say what I learnt in my Primer about what it is ?

'You may say just what you like, so long as you make us all understand.'

'Well,' she began slowly, "'Political Economy treats of the wealth of nations; it inquires into the causes which make one nation more prosperous than another. It aims at teaching what should be done in order that poor people may be as few as possible, and that every one may, as a general rule, be well paid for his work. It inquires what wealth is, how we can best consume it when we have got it, and how we may take advantage of the other sciences to get it" (Prof. Jevons).'

'It does do a jolly lot,' said Alan.

'Yes,' answered his uncle; 'or, as Professor Hearn sums it up, "it is the science of efforts to satisfy wants." It examines, Nell'—

'The production, distribution, and consumption of wealth,' she answered quickly.

'Yes; it examines for us how to produce, distribute, and consume or use wealth; and it finds out, as few of us, I suppose, could find out for ourselves, what must determine wages, profits, and rent.'

'And it traces,' Nell went on, as her uncle stopped, the connection that there is between the character of the workman and the character of his work.'

'What is a science, Nell?' asked Alan. 'Do you know?'

'I know what other people say it is, and understand myself a little what they mean, but I don't know if I can make you understand. It is knowledge of certain truths, or understanding certain truths or facts on some subject that is being inquired into. My Primer said: "A science

brings together a great number of similar facts, and finds that they are special cases of some great uniformity which exists in nature. It describes this uniformity in a simple or definite statement, or law. Science also foresees. Its business is to discover and apply principles or truths that are self-evident. Political economy is a science because it collects and arranges and reasons about a particular class of facts."

'What is that long "U" word, Nell?'

'Uniformity? It means sameness, being like something else.'

'And foresee,' said Mr. St. Aubyn, 'is to see beforehand; and I think Margery wanted to ask what "self-evident" meant.'

'So I did, Father. I suppose you could foresee that,' she said.

Little Margery was very sharp, too, sometimes.

'Well, self-evident means evident of itself without requiring any proof. But Nell and I do not expect you little people to understand all this; so do not let the long words bother your poor little brains too much.'

'I like long words,' said Margery.

'And you know, Alan,' Nell then said, 'Political Economy must be useful here, because it tells people how to make and how then best to spend wealth; what wealth is, for it isn't only money; how to give charity to the people to whom it will do most good: it tells us also that people must be educated; it teaches them to work, shows them what is the best and most profitable work for them to do, advises them to put by something for when they

are old, shows why people pay rent, and that isn't even all.'

'It must be a big thing,' said Kathleen.

'And rather interesting, I should think,' Margery added.

'I liked it very much indeed, at school; but do you know, Uncle, some of the other girls could not bear it!' Nell said.

'When shall we begin to learn it, Father?' asked Kathleen.

'When you are old enough to understand it better and to profit by it.'

'If wealth isn't only money,' then said Alan, 'I suppose it's land and houses too.'

'Yes, it is; but all sorts of things are wealth,' Nell answered. 'My Primer said that anything to be called wealth must be transferable, limited in supply, and useful.'

'What does "limited in supply" mean?' Alan asked.

'Only a certain quantity. Not to have as much of anything as you could want.'

'But I should think,' said Alan, 'that the more you have, the richer it would make you.'

'I did not understand this till I read and learnt on. If we have as much of anything as we want, having more of it would not be riches to us; on the contrary, it might be in the way and spoil anything, like too much sugar in our tea, too much rain which might cause a flood. Enough sugar is riches, but not an unlimited supply; and *enough* water is very great riches.'

'And if we hadn't any of anything, we should value it very much when we had it,' Alan said, speaking in a very Irish sort of manner, 'because it would be the first of it

that we had, like my beautiful watch that Cyril gave me yesterday.'

'Yes; but if you had had a thousand watches, and did not know where to put them all, that one would not have been riches for you; so now you see what "limited in supply" means. And the watch was transferable; it could be passed from one person to another. And it is very useful, so I should think,' Nell said, 'that your watch must really have been wealth to you.'

'Have any of your tenantry learnt these lessons, Uncle?' Alan then asked.

'As far as I could, I have tried to bring home to them the useful lessons that Political Economy teaches, such as being industrious, persevering, thoughtful, painstaking, large-minded, and unselfish. It is very necessary for us to be thoughtful if we wish to produce wealth, because before we produce it we must determine what we require, what would be wealth for us, and then try to produce it with the least possible labour. There are three things necessary to the production of wealth. Come, Nell, what are they?'

She considered, and then answered: 'Land, labour, and capital.'

'Yes, we want land, and by that we mean source of materials, some matter upon which to labour; then we want well-regulated, methodical labour, and capital or something by the aid of which, or with which, to work. Some workmen have no capital besides the clothes they wear whilst at their work, and the food they have just eaten to give them strength for their labour.'

'Then,' said Nell, 'we have to work at the best time

the best place, and in the best manner, as well as at that occupation for which we are best suited, so as not to waste time and make mistakes ; and when we can also help one another by working together, we should do so.'

'What is the occupation to which people are best suited?' asked Margery.

'That work that they can do best and easiest ; for instance, if I wanted a rabbit-hutch made and a pocket-handkerchief hemmed, and I gave Alan the handkerchief to hem and you the rabbit-hutch to make, what would you think of me?'

'That you were very silly, Father ; and I should go to Alan and ask him to change work with me, as he is clever at making rabbit-hutches, and I could hem better and quicker than he could !'

'Exactly so ; and that is what we mean by working at that occupation which is best adapted to us.'

'I don't wonder, Uncle, that you are so rich,' Nell then said, 'as I expect you had a good deal of capital to start with to help you to produce more wealth.'

'I had a good deal, thanks to my ancestors ; for capital, you know, Nell, is the result of saving and abstinence ; and had they not been sober, saving, and industrious people, they would not have made and accumulated the wealth which, as you say, has helped me to make more.'

'The Adamsons told me,' Nell went on, 'that they themselves were once so poor that they never had enough to live upon week by week, and were always getting into debt, but that now they are quite comfortably off, and are accumulating a little capital by putting by a trifle every week ; and they said they had you to thank for all this,

because you had refused to help them until they helped themselves.'

'Yes, I remember doing this; and now they find their own industry quite sufficient to support them.'

'Why were they so poor?' asked Kathleen.

'Because they spent the money that they should have saved in drink.'

'Yes; they said you had taught them thrift, and they blessed you for it.'

'What is thrift?' asked Margery.

'Making it a practice to save and manage economically. But, Nell,' her Uncle then said, 'what was it that made you first think our people had studied Political Economy?'

'I can't remember when I first thought about it,' she answered, 'but I know Mrs. James, the shoemaker's wife, made me think about it last evening when she came to see Nurse. She was in such a hurry to be off, when it came near to her supper time, because she said she was always most particular never to be late with a meal, as her husband and son worked well and hard, and must have their comforts attended to; and meals at the proper time were when they were most useful to us, and did one the most good: that made me remember "that all wealth is produced in order that it may be consumed when it best fulfils its purpose and is most useful." And then you are always so punctual, and do everything so properly; and other people I have been to see did not seem to be thinking only about themselves, but they seemed to be trying to do what would be best for the whole neighbourhood, and for you too, Uncle. Nobody seemed to be

interfering with one another's trades, but to be doing just what they could all do best; and even little children seemed to have something or other useful to do, and the proper time in which to do it.'

'Quite right, Nell, to associate all this with Political Economy, for it is "the truest Political Economy to look beyond the immediate effect of what we do, and seek the good of all mankind."

'There are some short-sighted people who lose a great deal of time trying, in order to save money, as they say, to be "Jacks of all trades" for themselves, and they generally end'—

'By being masters of none,' Nell rejoined quickly.

'And not only do those people not save money, I believe, but they very often lose it. We had such an instance in our own village. Old Grace Field, a washerwoman, who can earn a good sum of money a week at her trade, for she knows it thoroughly and has a great many customers, had her husband, who carries out papers to sell of a morning, laid up for several weeks with rheumatism. She was advised, and wisely, until he was better, to engage a man to do his work for him. But "Oh no," she said, she could not afford that, as there would be the man's wages to pay out of the profits from the papers, which was not very much; so she would take them out herself.'

'But what about her washing and nursing her sick husband?' Alan asked.

'Ah, you see that too, my boy,' said his uncle. 'She had as much washing to do as she could possibly do properly; and now, what with the time she had lost in folding and sorting the papers, about which she knew

nothing, and then leaving them at the different houses, some of her regular washing she could not take in, some she sent home so badly done that her employers would employ her no longer, and towards the end of the week she was obliged to hire an extra woman to come in and help her; so that, altogether, instead of saving, as she thought she would have done, by not hiring a man at once to do her husband's work, who would have done it in half the time that she did it, she lost considerably, and her poor old husband had so little of her attention that he was ill really longer than he need have been; and as some of the washing was taken away from her and given to other women, she lost not only money but work. We can all help one another and ourselves best by doing that work which is more suitable and easy for us to do than it would be for others. For instance, if I were to think that I should save money by building a house myself, or your mother were to think that she would have more money to give away to those who needed it by sweeping the house herself and not employing servants, do you think we should either of us be right?'

The children all laughed.

'Of course not,' they said. 'People whose business it is to build a house could do it much better than you, and you had better pay them for doing it, while you do something else yourself; and I'm sure Mother wouldn't sweep a room half as quickly as the housemaids would,' Margery said, 'for she wouldn't be strong enough for that sort of work.'

'No; and meanwhile there is work for us to do that benefits others, while others do work to benefit us,' said

Mr. St. Aubyn. 'And I believe,' he went on, almost forgetting that most of those to whom he was talking were only little children, so much interested did they seem in the conversation, 'that if each nation, each province, each town, each village, each portion of land, would look to producing and furnishing what they could furnish and produce with the least possible labour and expense, and then sell and interchange their goods with others for goods that they, in turn, could raise more easily, we should soon lessen poverty, and increase wealth.'

'That would be free trade, wouldn't it, Uncle?' Nell asked. 'It is a good thing that we have free trade in England!'

'What do you call free trade?' Alan then wanted to know.

'Being able to send goods to other countries, and receiving goods back from those countries without paying duty.'

'But my father said he paid duty at the Custom-House when he arrived from India.'

'Yes; we pay duty on goods that are never produced here, such as tea, coffee, and tobacco.'

'In countries,' Mr. St. Aubyn went on to explain, 'where there is not free trade, there is said to be protection. When people, in those countries, send things that are said to be protected abroad, their state rewards them, and when the same goods are received into the country a heavy duty is levied. You will not understand, Alan, about this; but what it really amounts to is, that one nation wishes and tries to make another not to prosper, and ends by not prospering itself half as well as it would without this protection. Food is or becomes dearer, and as everybody must have food, trades are

carried on with difficulty, and less wages are given, which brings it round again to what, Nell?’

‘That the best way for everybody to get on is for goods to be sent about right and left, for everybody to make and produce what he can in the cheapest and best way that he can make and produce them, and then sell them where they are most valuable.’

‘Bravo, Nell,’ said her uncle; ‘I hope we all understand that as well as you do.’

‘We can’t do that,’ said Alan, ‘because Nell passed with honours in Political Economy; but she never explained it to me till now. Had we ever Protection, Uncle?’ he then asked.

‘Yes; when the Corn Laws were passed in 1815.’

‘What are the Corn Laws? I suppose I ought to know, as my uncle has so much property that produces corn; but I really don’t.’

‘Towards the end of the last century and beginning of this, there had been a great deal of war between the different countries of Europe, which interfered very much with foreign trade and caused prices to be very high. Indeed, in 1808, Napoleon had shut the ports of Europe against the merchandise of Great Britain; so, naturally, corn and other things went up very much in price. When peace was concluded in 1815’—

‘After the battle of Waterloo,’ said Alan.

‘Yes, when peace was concluded,’ Mr. St. Aubyn repeated, ‘the farmers began to think that their prices would fall again; and as they did not wish this to happen, the Corn Laws were passed, which required a protective duty to be levied, that food might still be dear.’

'What selfish people the farmers must have been !' said Kathleen, 'and stupid too, it seems.'

'They thought it would be better for them,' said Nell, 'but it was not.'

'No ; the high prices did not help the farmers at all, for their rent and other prices rose in consequence ; and they were also obliged to pay higher wages to their labourers, who had to pay so much for bread. Every industry, in fact, became depressed,—or perhaps you will understand better if I say, got to a low, bad state,—and all people were glad when in 1846 the Corn Laws were repealed.'

'There seem to be very few really poor people at St. Aubyn's, Uncle,' then said Nell, changing the conversation.

'There are not many. Those who are really poor in consequence of sickness and death, receive systematic relief ; but we have a rule here of long standing, that nobody receives (because nobody deserves) help who does not try to help himself or herself. Then we have a savings' bank club, into which people pay what they can afford to put by for times that are bad, and more and more of the people begin to find themselves able to put by a little.'

'They pay into the club at the coffee-house every Saturday evening,' said Nell. 'I saw it put up there. And what a beautiful large house the coffee-house is, too ! and all those seats in the garden looked so pretty ; and the bath-house is also a splendid place. The people must find it convenient.'

'Yes ; they are both fine buildings, and some of our

fellows who frequent the coffee-house are fine fellows too. Regular, honest work, sober, temperate habits, and no strikes—these are the means by which our people get on, Nell; and, on the whole, I believe they are a happy and contented community, and have learnt that by studying the interests of others they generally go the surest way to improve their own.'

'Uncle,' Alan then asked, 'why do you have so much rent paid to you?'

'Of late years, my boy, when the crops have not been so good, I have had much less than usual, and in some instances have excused rent altogether; but I receive rent in payment for the use of my land or houses which I hire out. The labourer gets his wages for his work, and I get my rent for my land. Whoever pays rent "gets back its full value in the extra advantages that he receives." My property belongs to me by right, because it has either been produced by me or by my ancestors, and upon it we have expended much money, labour, and time. If I lend out the use of my valuable land to others, they must naturally pay me rent for it. "The farmers who pay rent are able first to subtract from the value of what they produce yearly enough to pay all their outlay and to receive profits themselves."'

'Mr. Bloxon told me,' Nell then said, 'that he thought he took as much pride and pleasure in his little bit of property as you did in all your estates, and he called himself a "Peasant Proprietor."'

'Yes; he means that the ground he works belongs to him. He has bought instead of rented it. But I think most of our labourers also take a great interest in

their work. To encourage them to do so, I often give them a percentage on the results of their labour, besides their wages. Of course we have our faults here at St. Aubyn's, and there are some amongst us who do not get on at all well; but, on the whole, I think we are a well-to-do little colony, by which name I like to call ourselves. But this is certainly, in a great measure, first due to the fact that we are a sober, hard-working people, and have found that wealth depends more upon people's skill and activity even than upon the abundance of materials which they may possess.'

'I heard one man grumble, Uncle, because he said that another one had so much higher wages than he had.'

'That was Cox, I know; he is a noted grumbler. My bailiff has so often tried to show him, but he will never see it, that it is perfect folly to expect equality of wages, because it is equal folly to expect an equality of workmen. Some men have superior talents, power, strength, ingenuity; and these put to account must demand, and deserve, better wages than can inferior talents and work. Some perform more difficult and more dangerous work, others have laid out a good deal of capital in learning a trade—all of which has a right to expect some requital.'

'Do you do hard work, Father?' asked Margery.

'What should you say yourselves about that?'

'I should say very hard indeed,' said Nell.

'Tolerably hard,' said Alan.

'Not so very hard,' thought the twins.

'As a rule I do very hard and anxious work indeed,'

replied the master of St. Aubyn's; 'brain work, which is the very hardest of all—organizing, planning, arranging, overlooking, balancing, selecting.'

'Selecting what?'

'Suitable workmen and suitable work, for instance.'

'But your bailiffs and stewards do that.'

'Only under me. Believe me, Alan, my boy, there is not a labourer at St. Aubyn's who works harder than does her lord and master; and the harder he works, the better is he pleased. And may God bless and overrule his work,' he said solemnly, "'and direct the distribution of his work into rightful, proper channels.'"

'And yet you spare so much time to be with Cyril, and to think about all of us, you dear, good father,' said Margery, kissing him as she spoke. (Margery could be very loving and grateful when she chose.)

'Uncle Cyril,' Nell then said, 'do you know, I do think you spend your money so well!'

Uncle Cyril smiled.

'In what way?' he asked.

'Well, you know, the Primer says that "what we have to do is to endeavour to spend our means so as to get the greatest real happiness for ourselves, our relatives, friends, and all other people whom we ought to consider;" and look what pleasure you must be always giving everybody!'

'Perhaps everybody does not think so,' was the answer.

'I think it,' said Alan; 'Nell's quite right there.'

'Yes, Father darling,' said little Kathleen; 'I think it too.'

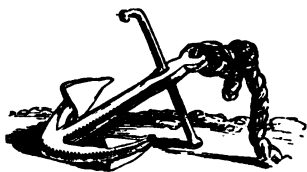
It was such a modest little girl who looked up to express her opinion, but the opinion was a very decided one, and her twin sister echoed it ; so all the party were agreed on this important point before they rose to separate, —Alan to go to Cyril, who, he was sure, must be awake now.

Margery turned back to say, 'Oh, Father, I forgot to tell you, we've quite done with two of our books, and they are all ready covered for the "Library."'

Books, so soon as they could be spared from the Hall, always went to the 'Library,' which was putting them to one of the best of accounts, as from here they were widely circulated, and many people could read them.

'Your Primer, Nell,' then said her uncle, smiling, 'has a good place in our Library, I can tell you.'

'I'm very glad of that,' was her reply.





CHAPTER XI.

IN 'THE SNUGGERY.'



MRS. St. Aubyn and her sister, Mrs. Godfrey, were both with Cyril when Alan appeared at the door, asking softly if he could come in. His cousin had not long been awake, and since he woke had not seemed much inclined to speak ; but directly he saw Alan, he brightened up. The two ladies then went to get ready for dinner, and left the boys together.

‘I was just beginning to wonder,’ Cyril then said, ‘where you could have got to, Alan. What with sleeping so long, and all, it seems such a long time since I have seen you.’

‘Well,’ Alan answered, ‘Nell’s been telling us Political

Economy, and so I thought I'd better stay until we'd finished hearing it. Would you like to know about Political Economy too?'

'It seems rather too long a word for me, Alan, thank you,' Cyril replied; 'don't you think it is?'

'Perhaps it is; but it's a good deal longer than it seemed, when Uncle and Nell explained it. You know it's how to make wealth best, and how to spend it best, and how everybody's got to do the work they can do best and easiest, and how they've got to think of one another and care for one another, and not only for themselves, and how they've got to save when they can,' Alan said, summing up for Cyril, as in his own mind he had summed up for himself, what he gathered to be the essence of Political Economy.

'It sounds very nice,' Cyril answered again, 'but I don't think I'd better hear it, as it wouldn't do me any good to know how to make wealth, because I shan't ever be able to make it; and I think I like to spend my money, as Father and Mother let Jocelyn, or anybody who's going shopping, spend it for me.'

'Wealth isn't only money,' Alan persevered; 'and you gave me wealth, they said, when you gave me your watch yesterday. That was kind of you. But perhaps it would give you a headache to hear about it, and I don't think I could tell it very well, either,' he went on, 'so I won't try; but Nell does so like this Political Economy, and so does Uncle.'

'I know it's too long a word for me, thank you, Alan,' Cyril repeated; 'but it wasn't kind of me to give you

my watch, because I can't wear it, and I shall like to see you with it on. The clock is much the best for me.'

The way that Cyril spent his liberal allowance of pocket-money was in presents for this person and presents for the other—a new spade for James, for instance, who was so proud of it that he would hold it up a dozen times a day for 'Master Laddie' to see, and then send him a message to say that no spade had ever dug so well before; a new shawl for an old villager friend to go to church in, to see her grandchild baptized, because this friend was so kind in sending Cyril flowers that she said 'she had growed purpose for him;' an easy little chair or a toy for a sick child, who had not the comforts that he had,—these were some few of the many ways in which Cyril's money was spent; and he seemed to forget no one. A toy one day for Hyacinth, a cricket-ball for Alan, birthday presents for the twin sisters, a memorandum-book for Father, something very useful for Mother's work-box; and his Uncle, Aunt, Nell, Donald, and the nurses, and many servants were all in turn remembered. No Political Economy could certainly have helped Cyril to spend his money more liberally on others, or in a way that gave him greater pleasure; and the dear boy was always so contented when his messenger came home with a present that he had commissioned him or her to buy, and always thought that the best thing possible had been bought, even when it happened to be something quite different from what he had really wanted.

'And Father and Mother and Mr. Maurice tell me what

my work is,' Cyril went on; 'and I shouldn't wonder if that long word didn't tell me not nearly half so well.'

Cyril worded his sentence rather clumsily, but Alan understood it.

'They tell me that *my* work is to be very patient, Alan, and never to be cross because I have to lie down, and can't ever get up. They say that God has made me like this because it is best for me and for them, and that I shall be as well and strong as anybody in Heaven—isn't that beautiful?—and that if I am quite patient, I do just the work that God has given me to do, in the best way that I can do it; so I try very hard to be quite patient; and that long word couldn't tell me any better than that, could it, Alan?'

'No, I don't think it could; but it tells other people.'

'And, you know, I ought to be very happy, because everybody is so good and kind to me, and I have such lovely things; and I can see the sky so well from here when I look out, and it has such pretty colours sometimes, and the flowers in the garden are so pretty too.'

'Do you remember what Mrs. Brand told me a long while ago about "Master Laddie," which was you, looking up at the sky like your flower did?' Alan asked. This had made a great impression upon the strong child.

'Yes, I remember quite well, and it's true too.'

'Alan,' Cyril said the next time that the boys were alone together, 'I was looking out a piece of poetry the other day, that Father or Mother once read to me. If I say it to you now, will you learn it, as I want you to

very much? And then don't forget it again, as I want you to say it for me to my father and mother when I'm gone away from them; will you? It's only four lines.'

Cyril had a most comfortable book-rest, that fitted over his couch; so he could amuse himself for a short time with a book whenever he liked and was well enough to do so. He now repeated these lines, and Alan said them after him until he knew them quite well:—

'When friends asleep in Jesus fall,
Why should we shake at death's alarms?
'Tis but the gentle Saviour's voice
Calling them to His arms.'

'Aren't they pretty?' Cyril asked.

'Yes,' answered the other; but they made Alan cry, and he added quickly, 'Don't go away, Cyril.'

Tears came into the sick child's eyes too, while he said:

'I shan't like to leave Father and Mother, and you and everybody; but, you know, it will be very nice There for me. And you'll come, too, some day; so you won't mind very much if I go soon, will you? Of course we'll be *that* there together too. I shall be sorry to go away from you, Alan,' Cyril added; 'but I do think I shall like to go rather soon now, for I get so, so tired; and if I'm too tired, I couldn't speak to you, could I?'

'You could when you weren't too tired,' Alan sobbed. 'Couldn't you? Oh, Cyril, I couldn't ever bear to come again to St. Aubyn's if you weren't here. Oh, please, please don't go!'

'Don't you know,' Cyril then asked, 'that I haven't a thing to do with it, and that I've got to go when it's the right time for me by God's clock? Mr. Maurice says He will send an angel to carry me away. That's all I know, and that I'm very tired here sometimes now.'

Alan buried his face on Cyril's couch and sobbed. Cyril had meant to comfort Alan beforehand, and perhaps some day his words may return and comfort this loving little boy, but just now they went far to break his affectionate little heart.

'Don't cry, Alan,' Cyril said after a little while; and then he added, 'Do you think the Alan Cyril is like me? A number of people say he is.'

'I think he is, too,' Alan answered; 'but he sounds like a ship when you call him "The Alan Cyril,"' and when Alan said this, Cyril smiled.

'I'm glad he's called the same as us both,' Cyril went on, 'because then they'll still have a Cyril; and when you're not here—and they do love you to come, Alan, because you are such a comfort to me—they will have an Alan too. He's a darling little baby. Nurse put him on my couch for a minute this morning, and he's very strong, for he did kick about. I don't think there's any fear that he won't walk.' Cyril had no feelings of jealousy whatever now, only a longing for all his brothers and sisters to be very strong, and never make Father or Mother unhappy.

'And, Alan,' he soon began again, 'do come to St. Aubyn's in your holidays when Uncle and Aunt can spare you, as my father and mother say you are a darling little

fellow ; and then you can comfort them for me.' Cyril was crying too, now. This unselfish little fellow was looking, as it were, beyond his own death to feel for those whom he would leave behind.

'If you want me to come, of course I will,' Alan then said ; 'but please do not talk any more about going away. Perhaps you mightn't yet.'

'There's just one more thing,' Cyril then said. 'You know, Alan, how you said a long while ago that you'd write my letters for me when I was big. Well, as I shan't be big, will you write a long paper for me now? It's in my play-box. I asked Father to give it me yesterday, and I want you to put on it all my toys, and books, and pictures, and who I want to give them to.' Alan did not like the task, but writing so much for Cyril seemed rather a nice thing to do ; and in his excitement to write very well, he almost forgot the sadness mixed up with the task.

'Mother said, as I wanted to do this so much,' Cyril said as Alan sat down by a little table near to him with a very business-like looking sheet of office paper before him and a pencil in his hand, 'that I might do just what I liked. Wasn't it kind of her? And look here,' he went on, 'there's a red line drawn all the way down the paper ; so you can write the names there, and what everybody's to have on the other side of the line.'

'All right,' Alan replied, and began the task, over which he took such care that it could not be finished until the next day.

'Put Chess-Board first,' Cyril said, 'and Nell the other side of the line.'

This was because Nell had played some nice games of chess with him.

'Large Picture Bible—Alan.'

'Bible Picture Book—"The Alan Cyril."'

'Money-box for Margery.' This, Cyril explained, was to help her to try to begin to save.

'Writing-desk for Kathleen.'

'Musical Box for his aunt, because she did like it so much.'

'Scrap-book for Hyacinth.'

'The best puzzle for Donald that he was always wanting to play with,' and so on, till Father, Mother, the nurses, James, and no end of villagers and other people were all remembered. 'And then,' Cyril said, 'Mother will send some of the best books and toys to the Hospital.' This was the Hospital for Children with Hip-disease, in Queen's Square, about which and its little inmates Cyril loved to hear, and to whom many of his toys had gone from time to time. 'And she will divide the other books and toys between everybody,' he went on; 'and I've asked Nurse to give this beautiful feeding-bottle to Johnnie Dakins, because he's very ill too, but hasn't the same beautiful things that I have, Jocelyn says. And, Alan, poor Joey,' he then added; 'I've asked Mother to love Joey very much for me, and let him follow her about, because, you know, Joey will miss me so much. You see, he's my dog, and when he isn't out he's nearly always here or on the mat outside. Aren't you, Joey?' and the little terrier stood up on his hind legs for his little master to pat so soon as he spoke to him.

'Please, Cyril,' Alan then said, 'don't say any more of these things, as I don't like them.'

The little boy smiled so brightly in answer, as he replied, 'But you like to make me happy, don't you? And you have, now you've written that so beautifully. I didn't know I'd half so many lovely things. Did you? How kind of people to have given them to me!' and Cyril never felt half so much pleasure in the possession of his treasures as he did now when he was meting them out to others.

'It is a good thing you write so beautifully,' Cyril began again, surveying the wonderful document. Then he paused for a few minutes, and looked very serious.

When he next spoke, he said, 'Perhaps I oughtn't to have asked you not to be a soldier, as you won't have to write letters for me now. Would you like to be it again?'

'No,' said Alan promptly; 'if you don't want me to write your letters for you, I'll be an army doctor, and cure the sick and wounded soldiers, and be doctor to their wives and children when they're ill. Wouldn't that be nice?'

'You *couldn't* be anything better,' Cyril answered, very quickly for him. 'I like that the best of everything you could be,' and in the feeble little voice rang an accent of great satisfaction.

Alan gave a sigh of relief, as though he were very glad to have made Cyril happy by this decision, and now he said he never meant to change again.

The next moment there was a knock at the door, and

Jocelyn, who was in her room, opened it to admit another dear friend of Cyril's, Mr. Maurice from the Rectory. He was always a very frequent visitor to St. Aubyn's Hall and her 'Snuggery,' but his visits to the little invalid heir of St. Aubyn's were being paid more frequently just now. However, he would not stay to-day, as he said Cyril seemed to be tired ; but he would call again to-morrow, which he did.

And the day after to-morrow the Captain's leave of absence expiring, he had to return home, leaving his wife and children to follow later.

'Bother the drill season !' Alan said to Cyril, when he explained why his father must go home. 'But,' he continued, 'he was jolly lucky to get even ten days now. Do you know my father is such a favourite in the regiment ?' Alan then said. 'Before we left Allahabad, the band played, "For he's a jolly good fellow," just for him ; and he was sent home in command of the troops,—about a hundred, I should think,—and that doesn't happen to every captain, I can tell you.'





CHAPTER XII.

COMFORT.



'Poor
Joey!' said

Mrs. St. Aubyn caressingly, as ten days later she came with eyes very red from crying out of the 'Snuggery,' and tried in vain to comfort, by patting and coaxing, a disconsolate dog. 'Poor Joey, I wish we could tell you, so that you could understand us,' she went on, 'as we tell ourselves, that he is much better off; for he is, Joey, and he would be pained if he could see you fret like this.'

Poor Cyril's pet dog never looked up at her, still gazing longingly at the 'Snuggery' door as though he knew all about it.

'Laddie' went Home early this morning. It was the

time by 'God's clock.' The angels had fetched him at last, and the dear child's death had been as calm, and peaceful, and happy as had been his beautiful life. Nobody seemed to have been forgotten by him, nobody unloved to the very end, as he was tenderly loved by all.

'Come, Joey,' Mrs. St. Aubyn continued as she moved a little aside; 'come with me, Joey, and let us comfort one another,' but Joey took no heed.

She then went to Alan's little bedroom, thinking that she heard sobs proceeding thence and, true enough, there she found her little nephew sobbing as we know Alan could sob when he was in great distress.

'Poor children,' Nurse Davies had said to Margery, Kathleen, Donald, and Hyacinth, 'you've lost a rare good brother, that you have;' but nobody had said 'Poor Alan' to him. Even his own mother, Alan thought, had been busy comforting everybody but himself; and yet he felt so dreadfully sad, and alone, and so sorely in need of sympathy and comfort, now that Cyril had gone away.

'I suppose they think he wasn't my brother, and so I don't care so much,' Alan said to himself. 'Well, of course they didn't know our secret, because we didn't tell anybody but our two selves. O Cyril, Cyril, Cyril, why did you go away from me?' the child then cried aloud. 'I want you, oh! I do want you so much!' 'O Laddie, Laddie,' he went on, and just then Mrs. St. Aubyn opened the door.

'Hush, darling boy,' she said, almost choked with tears herself; 'our Cyril would not like us to grieve like this for him, would he, do you think?'

'Oh no,' Alan answered; 'but I miss him so much.'

Did not she, too, poor woman?

'We all must do that, Alan. God alone knows how I and his father will miss our boy. But, you know, he often had pain, and he used to feel very tired and always had to lie down; so, though he was so contented and cheerful, life could not have been as full of enjoyment for him as it is for us; and where he has gone he will never feel tired, never have pain again. Can't you bear to part with him, Alan, when you know that he is so well and happy, and has gone to a beautiful Home which he loves?'

The little boy looked up into his aunt's face very gravely, very self-reproachfully, for a few minutes, and then slowly repeated these lines to her:

'When friends asleep in Jesus fall,
Why should we shake at death's alarms?
'Tis but the gentle Saviour's voice
Calling them to His arms.'

'Who taught you those words, Alan?' she then asked, looking very much surprised that a little boy should either know or think of them just then.

'Cyril taught me them,' Alan answered quickly, 'for me to say to you and Uncle Cyril when he'd gone away,' he said. 'Do you think they're pretty?'

Mrs. St. Aubyn could not answer.

'Cyril said they were to comfort you,' Alan went on, 'and they've made you cry.'

'They have comforted me very much, Alan,' she answered, 'more than I can tell you. God bless my little cripple boy, Alan. Yes, I could never call him that

when he was here ; but it's over now, all over and past. All his little sorrows, privations, and pains have quite ended, Alan, and his real joys have begun. Yes, we must not mourn. Why should we, as your poetry asks ? Oh, Alan ! if Cyril thought so much about us, if our darling looked beyond his own death and wanted to bring comfort to us, shall we not obey his sweet message and dry our tears ? He thought very much of you, too, Alan. He has often said to me lately, " I hope Alan won't miss me very much." So, as he thought of us then, let us try to rejoice with him now. You have, my dear boy,' she went on, ' I know, lost a brother in Cyril ; for you were dearly fond of one another. But he is not lost to us, Alan, only gone on before us ; so let us now try to copy his example and be good and patient as he was. Margery says,' Mrs. St. Aubyn added, ' that she means to try very hard to be a better girl,' and the fond mother's voice quivered as she thought of the little girl who was naughty so often.

' Did you know our secret ? ' Alan asked suddenly.

' No ; Cyril only told me that you had one.'

' Because you said it just now,' Alan continued, ' so I thought you must know it,' and the child looked much comforted by the kind words that his aunt had spoken to him.

' Shall I tell it you ? ' Alan then asked. ' Would you like to know it, because it's no use keeping it now there isn't Cyril to keep it with, is it ? '

' No, darling boy ; and I should like to know it very much,' was the answer.

'Well, Cyril and I had a secret that we would always be *brothers*; and Cyril used to say in his prayers "my brother Alan," and I used to say "my brother Cyril." It was a good secret, because we did just love one another well,' Alan faltered.

'I know you did, my boy; and it was therefore a very beautiful secret,' his aunt replied. 'But don't you know, Alan,' she went on, 'that Cyril left you to comfort me? So you will really try to do it, will you not, as you did when my first little baby Alan died?'

'Did I comfort you then?' he asked quickly.

'Yes, very much.'

'Cyril will like to be with that Alan again very much, I expect,' the child then said. 'He has an Alan now, and we have an Alan and a Cyril, but we've *no* "Laddie" any longer. Yes, it is a pretty name; and when I heard it often, it seemed like Cyril, didn't it? But I've forgotten another thing,' he said after a slight pause. 'You don't *fear*, Aunt Mary, do you?'

'Fear what, Alan?' she asked.

'Well, I suppose because Cyril has gone,' he said. 'He told me that he hoped "Fear not" would be said to you when he was gone away, like it was said to the mother of the other "The Lad."'

Mrs. St. Aubyn could not quite understand.

'If you wait a minute,' Alan then said, 'I'll fetch it and show you,' and off he ran, returning soon afterwards with the *Child's Picture Bible* opened at these words: 'Fear not, for I have heard the voice of the lad.'

Mrs. St. Aubyn understood now, and more and more

was struck by the great beauty of character and loving thoughtfulness of the dear little cripple son so lately called away from her.

'Cyril liked all this so much,' Alan said, 'because it was about "the lad" who could hardly speak, and God heard his voice; and then he said he hoped "fear not" would be said to you. Do you fear, Aunt Mary?' he asked again.

'There is nothing to fear, darling. Cyril meant he hoped I should be comforted, and I am—oh, so fully! How could I fear, Alan, when I know that my little boy is now so happy? I feared while he was here that he should get worse or suffer more pain, or be unhappy, or even go away and leave me, for it was hard to make up my mind to that; but now that he is beyond the reach of pain and sorrow, there is no fear that I could have for my Laddie, Alan. And, you know, we *have* a Laddie still,' Mrs. St. Aubyn continued; 'though we cannot see him, he is still ours. But come now, dear boy,' she then said quickly, 'and let us go and see the other children and poor Joey. I do not like you to be here alone, and your mother will be wondering what has become of you.'

'All right,' Alan answered, 'I'll come,' and away they walked together, Cyril's mother and his adopted eldest brother.

'Do you know, Aunt Mary,' Alan said as they went along, 'you're very like Cyril—I don't mean your face, though that is too rather, but what you'—(he did not quite know whether to say the word 'say' or 'do;') he

might have said either with truth, but at last he said 'do'). 'You don't think of yourself, but you think of me and everybody first; and Cyril did just that too.'

Mrs. St. Aubyn's having tried to stifle her own grief so as to think of, and comfort, Alan and everybody else, though she must have been more unhappy than any one herself, had not been lost upon the child.

'It doesn't matter my telling you our secret now, does it?' he then asked in a serious, half-doubtful tone of voice; to which question this satisfactory answer was given by his aunt:

'I am sure Cyril would have liked you to do so very much.'

'I am glad,' Alan answered, 'and I shall tell my mother too.'

'I want very much to do what Cyril likes,' the boy went on. 'What do you think I could do, Aunt Mary?'

Mrs. St. Aubyn looked very kindly at her hasty, impulsive little nephew, who of late had lost so much of his hastiness, and said, 'Wouldn't it be a capital thing, Alan, if you were to try very hard not to get angry any more?'

'That's just exactly what I will do,' was the reply, 'and I have tried before.'

'I know you have.'

At that moment Margery was sitting on a chair in the nursery all alone, not in punishment, but from choice, also making good resolutions for the future, which, let us trust, she may really try to keep.

It was very wonderful how wide an influence for good the little invalid lad, Cyril St. Aubyn, had exercised far and

wide during his brief lifetime, and what further influence the silent voice of 'The Lad' seemed likely to exercise after death.

It was a glorious day when they laid the dear boy in his grave.

He was buried on the sunny side of the churchyard of St. Aubyn's, in a very lovely spot, amongst the flowers, beneath the shadow of an overhanging tree. Different lads of the village begged to be allowed, in turn, to carry 'The Lad' of St. Aubyn's to his last home on earth ; and many a grey-haired and middle-aged man and woman, and many a boy and girl of every age, were present as mourners. All the children from the Hall carried Laddie's favourite flowers.

These words were written below the little tombstone cross :—

Cyril St. Aubyn,

AGED ELEVEN YEARS,

CALLED HOME, AUGUST 15, 1881.

'Suffer little children to come unto Me.'—St. Luke xviii. 16.

'Fear not ; for God hath heard the voice of the lad.'—Gen. xxi. 17.

When very early next morning the father visited his boy's grave, he found Joey upon it, for the dog had remained there all night ; and a little later on, when James and Alan went together to plant some flower-roots beside the grave, Joey was still there ; but when Alan tried to explain that 'Laddie' (Joey knew the sound of that



"CYRIL ST. AUBYN."

name quite well) was very happy now, no doubt comforted by the happier look and more cheerful tone of voice of the boy, who Joey must have known loved his little master very fondly, and was missing him very sorely, the dog reluctantly, but obediently, followed Alan and James back home.

'You were to be comforted, you know, too, Joey,' Alan said as they walked along. 'Am I doing it properly, do you think?'

Poor Joey was too sad to wag his tail in answer.

It may seem strange that a sick child, confined entirely to his own home, could be missed not only at home, but abroad; yet so it was, for everybody at St. Aubyn's seemed somehow or another to be missing 'The Lad' to-day. The good influence that this patient young child had exercised had spread far and wide on and around his father's property; but sorrowful as the empty 'Snuggery' made his two fond parents' hearts, they would not, on any account, have called their darling back into it again.

Many loving tears were shed over the long paper that Cyril had asked Alan to write for him, and each recipient of Laddie's gifts deeply prized and valued them.

The evening of the funeral Alan was again absent from the others, and his mother found him sitting alone in the 'Snuggery.'

'I forgot,' he said as she looked in, 'and came up here to be with Cyril; but when I remembered, I thought I'd like to stay a little bit and think about him. Oh, Mother! it isn't such a nice place here now, is it?' he then asked sadly.

'You will always miss Cyril very much,' was the reply; 'but you have a great deal to comfort you, my darling. I am so glad that you, my boy, were so much of a comfort to your invalid cousin. Think, for instance, Alan,' his mother went on, 'how great your grief would now have been, had you been selfish when with Cyril, or had you not tried to give him pleasure while he was here.'

'I *am* glad, Mother,' Alan said quickly, 'that you advised me to go into his "position" that day, and that I did promise not to be a soldier.'

A great deal more Mrs. Godfrey said to her son by way of comfort, a great deal besides the secret he told to her; and the fact that his mother's words were spoken to Alan in the 'Snuggery' made them yet more full of comfort than even otherwise they might have been.

A fortnight later, the Godfreys left St. Aubyn's, Mr. St. Aubyn going with them as far as the station to see them off. Alan was very silent during this drive to the station. His uncle asked him of what he was thinking.

'I was thinking about Cyril,' he replied; 'I believe I shall always think of Cyril.'

'And what are you thinking about yourself, Uncle?'

'Much the same as you, my boy,' was the answer; 'and, thank God, we can all say it is a very cheery thought!'

'We can, indeed,' said both Captain and Mrs. Godfrey, for the Captain was able to come and fetch them home.

And meanwhile these words were echoing in Nell's memory: 'What we have to do is to endeavour to spend

our means so as to get the greatest real happiness for ourselves, our relatives, friends, and all other people whom we ought to consider.' Surely this *was* well done at St. Aubyn's! This place seemed to her to be a very exemplification of all that. And no one had illustrated it better than Cyril, its little cripple heir, who might be said not only to have 'spent' his means, but himself, dear little boy, his thoughts, his words, his deeds, 'so as to get the greatest real happiness for others.'



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NEW SERIES of SCHOOL READING BOOKS,

TO BE ENTITLED, THE

“STANDARD AUTHORS” READERS.

By the EDITOR of ‘POETRY for the YOUNG.’

The Books have been planned throughout to meet exactly the requirements of the New Mundella Code. They will be well printed from clear type, on good paper, bound in a strong and serviceable manner, and will have interesting and useful Illustrations from beginning to end.

In the Infants’ Books of the Series, very careful graduation in the introduction of sounds and words will be combined with that great desideratum in Infants’ Readers, an interesting connected narrative form.

The distinctive features of the Series in the Higher Books will be that the passages selected (both prose and poetry) will be taken from the works of Standard Authors, thus complying with the requirements of the New Code, and that they will be of such a nature as to awaken, sustain, and cultivate the interest of youthful readers.

The Explanatory matter will be placed at the end of each Book (so that children may, at the discretion of the teacher, be debarred access to it), and will take the form of three appendices:—

- (a) Explanatory Notes.
- (b) Biographical Notes.
- (c) A Glossary of Rare or Difficult Words.

The compilation has been made with the utmost care, with the assistance and advice of gentlemen long conversant with the requirements of Public Elementary Schools; and the Publishers feel that the literary, artistic, and mechanical excellences of the Books will be such that the series will be pronounced

The “No Plus Ultra” of School Reading Books.

The Books for Standards V., VI., and VII. will be ready shortly, and Specimen Pages and full Prospectuses, with Tables of Contents of the various Books, are preparing for distribution to all teachers applying for them.

GRIFFITH & FARRAN, ST. PAUL’S CHURCHYARD, LONDON.

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